



Legislation Text

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ORIGINAL

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Resolution opposing revisions to Chapter 119 of the Wisconsin Statutes allowing for mayoral appointment of either School Board members or the Superintendent of Schools.

As a city of the first class, public instruction in the City of Milwaukee is largely regulated by Chapter 119 of the Wisconsin Statutes - First Class City School Systems. The role, responsibilities and selection process of the 9-member Milwaukee Board of School Directors, along with the Superintendent of Schools, is dictated by state statute. These School Board members are directly selected by the residents of the City of Milwaukee, with 8 individuals elected from numbered districts and one member elected at-large. The Superintendent of Schools is chosen by the elected School Board. This resolution opposes amending Chapter 119 to allow for mayoral appointment of either School Board members or the Superintendent of Schools.

Whereas, Chapter 119 of the Wisconsin Statutes, First Class City School Systems, regulates public instruction in cities of the first class, therefore specifically delineating operations of Milwaukee Public Schools ("MPS"); and

Whereas, The School Board in a city of the first class, per Chapter 119, is given broad-ranging responsibilities, including the possession, care, control and management of the schools, facilities, operations, property and affairs of the school district, and is further charged with promoting the cause of education, including establishing, providing and improving school district programs, functions, and activities for the benefit of pupils; and

Whereas, This School Board is directly accountable for selecting and dismissing a Superintendent of Schools, whose duties include the assignment of all teachers, the general supervision of schools and professional staff, and the manner of conducting and grading schools; and

Whereas, This School Board is entrusted with the formation and adoption of an annual budget necessary to operate all public schools in the city, repair and keep in order school buildings and equipment, make material improvements to school property, and purchase necessary additions to school sites; and

Whereas, Wisconsin Statutes provide for the direct election of the 9-member Milwaukee Board of School Directors by the residents of the City of Milwaukee, with 8 individuals elected from numbered districts and one member elected at-large; and

Whereas, This selection process represents democracy in its intended form - providing a direct link between the voter/constituents and the elected representative/leaders of MPS; and

Whereas, The socioeconomic makeup of a major metropolitan school district typically manifests itself in the form of poor attendance, unsatisfactory academic achievement and a high dropout rate; and

Whereas, The elected leaders of MPS continue to work diligently to surmount these challenges, challenges exacerbated by a flawed state funding formula; and

Whereas, Revising Chapter 119 to allow for mayoral appointment of School Board members does nothing to address underlying socioeconomic problems and severs the link between constituents and leaders of MPS, effectively disenfranchising Milwaukee voters from the selection of their School Board representatives; and

Whereas, Mayoral “control” does not increase accountability as advertised, as an elected School Board is more responsive to the needs of constituents than appointed members; and

Whereas, Mayoral control actually discourages parental participation, for while the mayor is surely the more visible elected position, a School Board member is the more accessible elected position; and

Whereas, Mayoral control in reality decreases stability, for replacing a single individual is surely more disruptive than replacing a member of a 9-person team; and

Whereas, Because federal “Race to the Top” funds are based on a state application, it is incorrect to state that potential access to these monies is contingent on mayoral control; and

Whereas, No overwhelming empirical evidence exists showing that mayoral control of school systems across the country improves school and student performance; and

Whereas, There is no need to amend Chapter 119 to allow for mayoral control of Milwaukee’s schools, for the mayor can best use his inherent position of authority and visibility to address joblessness, poverty and safety in the city, thereby vastly improving the chances for success of Milwaukee’s schoolchildren; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, that the Common Council opposes revisions to Chapter 119 of the Wisconsin Statutes allowing for mayoral appointment of either School Board members or the Superintendent of Schools.

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