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Governor Doyle Signs Bill to Prohibit the Creation of False Academic Credentials

EAU CLAIRE – At a ceremony at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Governor Jim Doyle today signed into law several bills to protect schools and improve education in the state.

“Wisconsin’s institutions of higher education are the envy of the nation, and this bill takes important steps to uphold the integrity of our schools,” Governor Doyle said. “Our world-class universities have always been the engines that drive Wisconsin and we must protect our legitimate institutions, students and educators from false academic institutions.”

Senate Bill 431 addresses the problems related to the use of false academic credentials created by "diploma mills" by prohibiting the use of the terms college, university, state and Wisconsin in the name of schools that are not certified as such by the Educational Approval Board. In addition, the bill creates a penalty for issuing and using a false academic credential and/or the false use of a legitimate academic credential. The bill upholds the integrity of degrees granted by the Wisconsin Technical College System, the UW System and other institutions of higher education and prevents against fraudulent institutions and degrees.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Risser and Vinehout and Representatives Hixson and Danou for their work on the bill.

Since taking office in 2003, Governor Doyle has taken major steps to improve education in Wisconsin. In his first term, the Governor protected schools from a Republican-led State Legislature’s attempt to slash education funding by \$400 million – a cut that would have devastated our schools and our students. The Governor increased funding for small class sizes, increased funding for special education, expanded school breakfast programs, expanded 4-year old kindergarten programs and invested in early childhood education. Governor Doyle also created the Wisconsin Covenant, a pathway to higher education for every hardworking Wisconsin student.

In addition to the bill to protect higher education institutions, Governor Doyle signed into law eight bills to improve education:

Assembly Bill 808 makes changes to the class size requirement for schools participating in the SAGE small class size program. The bill encourages more schools to participate in SAGE and gives schools with SAGE more flexibility to preserve their eligibility for the program.

Governor Doyle thanked Representatives Dexter and Hilgenberg and Senators Holperin and Kreitlow for their work on the bill.

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Senate Bill 146 provides certain benefits and protections to tribal schools and tribal school pupils and staff similar to those provided to private schools.

Governor Doyle thanked the Joint Legislative Council for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 250 makes changes to the Open Enrollment Program in union districts by amending policies related to how district elementary school students can count toward its enrollment cap.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Darling and Kedzie and Representatives Pasch and Nass for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 342 amends the Open Enrollment Program policies related to pupils attending a school district under Open Enrollment who are habitually truant.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Kreitlow and Lehman and Representatives Smith and Pope-Roberts for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 379 requires that, in cases where a school is closed due to a health threat, a school board must notify the Department of Public Instruction to assist the state in preventing and analyzing potential health crises.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Taylor and Hansen and Representatives Bernard Schaber and Berceau for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 407 makes change to rules determining eligibility for the Academic Excellence Higher Education Scholarship Program to equalize scholarship award criteria and provide financial assistance for high-performing students.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Miller and Taylor and Representatives Ballweg and Smith for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 598 amends the procedure for school district consolidations to provide flexibility and accelerate the process of streamlining consolidation procedures.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Vinehout and Holperin and Representatives Clark and Hraychuck for their work on the bill.

Senate Bill 341 increases penalty for persons found guilty of causing reckless bodily harm to a child.

Governor Doyle thanked Senators Jauch and Lassa and Representatives Hubler and Berceau for their work on the bill.