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STATE SENATOR • 20TH DISTRICT

Dear Editor,

This week is “School Choice Week.” Many have asked me how area taxpayers have benefited from school choice – particularly the Milwaukee program.

The Milwaukee school choice program is a unique and innovative initiative to provide alternatives to the failing track record of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The program gives poor inner-city parents the opportunity to enroll in private schools that offer opportunities for success.

Moreover, the creation of the Milwaukee school choice program has had a positive financial impact on the residents of my senate district and across the state. While our students may not attend choice schools, our public schools benefit with more general aid because the program exists. In short, school choice saves property taxpayers money.

In a Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) memo, the result of eliminating school choice programs would be a state aid reduction of nearly \$4.9 million in school districts I represent. The reduction in state aid would necessitate a substantial increase in local property taxes to keep revenues at current levels for area school districts. In short, school choice efficiencies result in property tax reduction for area taxpayers.

This reduction in aid occurs because nearly 27,000 school choice students would be funneling back into Milwaukee Public Schools. State and local taxpayers spend over \$15,000 to educate an MPS student, which is more than double the average school choice voucher, which is \$7,353. The exodus caused by the destruction of Milwaukee school choice could result in nearly \$272 million more money for MPS due to the resulting higher enrollment. The money has to come from somewhere – in this case local school aid. In fact, the money MPS gains is more than Wisconsin spends on school choice state wide.

Simply put, it costs state taxpayers more per pupil for a student to attend MPS than it does to provide a voucher to a choice student.

I have visited many of the voucher schools in my district and in Milwaukee. I am proud to represent multiple districts heralded by many including recently the *Washington Post* as the best in the nation. In Milwaukee, however, choice schools see better student outcomes when compared to their MPS counterparts. Because MPS is so inefficient with their state resources, school aid for local districts suffers.

We have known for years the Milwaukee choice program has had a positive impact on all students in the city. Now, we know without the program public schools would be impacted by lower aid. School choice provides an efficient cost saving alternative to public schools for Wisconsin taxpayers.

The efficiencies gained by the Milwaukee school choice program positively impact all Wisconsin students and public school districts. As a state, we must continue to find efficient ways to educate our children in a way that benefits all students and provides parents the opportunity of choice.

Kind Regards,

Duey Stroebel