



WISCONSIN FAMILY TIES

16 North Carroll Street, Suite 230
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

(608) 267-6888

Toll Free (800) 422-7145

Fax (608) 267-6801

www.wifamilyties.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Joanne Juhnke, Policy Director – (608) 320-6165, joanne@wifamilyties.org

Notable Lack of Demand for Vouchers Seen Among Wisconsin Public School Families Statewide

Madison, WI, May 21, 2014 – The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction released details yesterday regarding applications for the statewide school voucher program in the coming year, demonstrating a remarkable lack of demand for the vouchers among families with students currently in Wisconsin public schools. Wisconsin Family Ties continues to raise concerns with Wisconsin’s voucher programs, specifically that private voucher schools have no obligation to provide the special education services upon which students with mental health and other challenges rely.

The statewide voucher program received only 537 valid applications from families with students currently in Wisconsin public schools, far below the program’s annual cap of 1,000. This total represents 19% of qualifying applications, compared to 75% of applications coming from current private school students, whose families will now be benefitting from an unnecessary entitlement enacted within the 2013 state budget.

“Wisconsin’s spending on private school vouchers continues to undermine funding for public schools, which unlike private voucher schools must accept and educate all students regardless of challenges or disabilities present,” said Hugh Davis, Wisconsin Family Ties executive director. “It’s noteworthy that even in the face of considerable advertising by private schools and voucher-supporting organizations, voucher applications from public school students were remarkably few.”

Wisconsin Family Ties supports sufficient funding for public education statewide, including restoring the state’s reimbursement rate for special education categorical aids to the level it was two decades ago.

About Wisconsin Family Ties

Wisconsin Family Ties, Wisconsin’s family voice for children’s mental health, is a parent-run nonprofit serving families that include children with social, emotional or behavioral challenges. Founded in 1987, its mission is to enhance lives by promoting children’s mental health.

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