WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

22ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

SANDY PASCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Assembly Bill 798
Testimony of Representative Sandy Pasch
Assembly Committee on Education
March 9, 2010

Ms. Chairwoman and committee members, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of Assembly Bill 798 today.

Senator Darling and I have proposed this legislation at the request of the K-8 Fox Point-Bayside School District. Although K-8 School Districts—such as Fox Point-Bayside—collaborate very closely with their Union High School Districts on curriculum and various services, current law treats them as if they are not affiliated with one another. Further, many students form close friendships with other students while attending K-8 schools and understandably would like to remain in a class setting with them once they reach high school.

While Open Enrollment students in K-12 Districts are given preferential treatment for Open Enrollment seats available in the high school within their District, K-8 students are not afforded the same opportunity. Therefore, this proposal would simply allows Open Enrollment students from K-8 Districts equal preference to enter the UHS School District if the UHS School District determines that there are Open Enrollment seats available.

An open enrollment student who graduates from Bayside Middle School should not have to compete with students from other districts to enter Nicolet UHS. This is a small, yet commonsense, change that simply brings fairness to students and families within K-8 Districts.

Ms. Chairwoman and committee members, thank you once again for allowing me to testify on this proposal in front of you today. As the lead Assembly sponsor, I appreciate your consideration of this simple change.

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March 8, 2010

Dear Members of the Assembly Education Committee,

Approximately four years ago, I became aware of a problem that Open Enrollment students who are attending the Fox Point-Bayside School District are experiencing at the conclusion of their eighth grade year. Under the current Open Enrollment laws in the state of Wisconsin, K-8 school districts like the Fox Point-Bayside School District and union high school districts like Nicolet Union High School District are treated as though they have no affiliation. Resident and Chapter 220 students who graduate from our Bayside Middle School are given the choice to enroll at Nicolet UHS. In the case of our Open Enrollment students who are preparing to go to high school during their eighth grade year, their parents learn that they must apply for a limited number of Open Enrollment seats at Nicolet. If they apply under the Open Enrollment law to the Nicolet Union High School District, they are treated as though they were coming from any other school district in the state of Wisconsin and must participate in a random selection process that does not give them any preference for available seats.

As Superintendent of Schools for the Fox Point-Bayside School District, I have had numerous parents of Open Enrollment students who attend our schools come to me with concerns about their child's very slim chance of attending Nicolet Union High School. The Fox Point-Bayside Schools work very closely with Nicolet High School, because the majority of our students will be attending Nicolet after they graduate from our middle school. Open Enrollment students who graduate from our middle school have been prepared with the same rigorous curriculum, have developed close relationships with their peers, and have had numerous experiences which have prepared them to have a successful high school career at Nicolet High School.

I ask that the committee support the change in the Open Enrollment law which is being introduced in Assembly Bill 798 by Representatives Pasch, Nass and Townsend and cosponsored by Senators Darling and Kedzie and the companion Senate Bill 250, which was introduced in the Senate by Senators Darling and Kedzie and cosponsored by Representatives Pasch, Nass and Townsend. The proposed change in the law under Assembly Bill 798 and Senate Bill 250 will allow Open Enrollment students from K-8 districts, which are affiliated with a union high school district, to be given preference under the law for available Open Enrollment seats in the union high school district. The current law already gives preference to pupils and to siblings of pupils who are already attending a nonresident district in a random selection process. The change in the law would extend this preference in a random selection process to Open Enrollment students in a K-8 district who desire to continue their education in the affiliated union high school district. I believe that the change under Assembly Bill 798 and Senate Bill 250 will be of great benefit to Open Enrollment students and their families and should be supported by the Assembly Committee on Education.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Petersen, Ed.D.
District Administrator
Fox Point-Bayside Schools