

February 9, 2010

Representative Frederick Kessler
Room 302 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Kessler:

You assert in your February 2 statement that “MPS will not be able to survive as a viable educational system if children whose parents are involved in their education continue to send their children to suburban schools under open enrollment or voucher schools, neither of which currently needs to accept kids with special needs.”

You misstate the facts. State law requires all private schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to accept children with special needs. This is true even though per pupil funding for these low-income children is only \$6,442, lower than per pupil funding for ANY Wisconsin school district and far below per pupil funding of \$14,011 for Milwaukee Public Schools.

The School Choice Demonstration Project reported in 2008 that 8.7 percent of children in the school choice program have special needs compared to 18.2 percent in MPS. Moreover, two of the 111 schools in the program serve only children with special needs. Essentially, the MPCP expands opportunities for low-income families whose children have special needs.

Freedom for low-income families to choose private schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program is not the cause of MPS problems. With higher graduation rates than MPS, the MPCP is part of the solution.

Sincerely,



Susan Mitchell, President