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WisGOP: Governor Evers wants to undo Wisconsin's school choice programs

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Contact: Charles Nichols
(608) 257-4765

Evers' First Budget Would Deprive Students of Educational Opportunities

[Madison, WI] – Once again, Governor Tony Evers is showing that he cares more about pandering to his partisan allies and special interest donors than delivering meaningful results for Wisconsin families. Evers' latest budget proposal would shut the door to a better education for thousands of Wisconsin's poorest families by undoing expansions to the state's private school choice programs. Despite the fact that students in choice programs regularly outperform their public-school peers, these programs have been strongly opposed by the state's teachers unions who have poured over a million dollars into Evers' political campaign over the years. Read the full write-up here or find excerpts below.

Gov. Tony Evers seeks to freeze enrollment in private voucher schools, suspend charter school expansion

Journal Sentinel
Molly Beck
February 25, 2019

Gov. Tony Evers in his first state budget is seeking to undo expansions of private voucher schools and independent charter schools passed by Republicans over the last decade.

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Evers, the former chief of the state's education agency, is seeking to freeze the number of students who may enroll in private voucher schools across the state, including in Milwaukee where the nation's first voucher program began nearly 30

years ago.
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"I've said all along that addressing the pressing issues facing our state starts with education," Evers said in a statement Sunday. "We have to fully fund our public schools, and we have to make sure voucher schools are accountable and transparent, not just for kids and parents, but for Wisconsin taxpayers, too."

Advocates for private school vouchers see the proposals much differently:

"Evers' budget would end school choice as Wisconsin knows it," said C.J. Szafir, executive vice president of the conservative law firm Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty.

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Aides to Evers provided the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel with an overview of proposed changes to the state's four private voucher programs and its charter schools, some of which were proposed by Evers in September through the Department of Public Instruction's budget request.
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Republicans under former Gov. Scott Walker backed aggressive growth in taxpayer-funded subsidies for students living in middle and low-income households who want to attend private schools, arguing students who lack the financial means to move to a higher-performing school should be able to enroll in them anyway.

Walker and Republicans also implemented new ways to create independent charter schools in liberal-leaning school districts that have long blocked them — like Madison and Milwaukee.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, said Evers' plan is dead on arrival.

"Wisconsinites should have more choices when it comes to the education of their children, not fewer," Fitzgerald said. "We will not support a budget that includes this proposal."

Democrats, teachers unions and public school advocates have opposed Republicans' expansions of alternatives to traditional public schools, which coincided with budget proposals that for the most part either cut funding or held

funding flat for public schools.
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School Choice Wisconsin president Jim Bender said halting the expansion of the state's private voucher school programs will deprive students who are performing well academically using vouchers.

"The parental choice programs in Wisconsin have seen higher ACT scores, higher report card scores and rapid growth across the state in recent years," Bender said Monday. "This proposal is not based on education data. It will not result in better academic outcomes for anyone. It will, however, pour gas on the fire of opposition for those who view the education of our children through a singular, political lens."

Read the full write-up here.