

WILL: Works with lawmakers to advance transparency bills to Gov. Evers

Posted on Wednesday, Sep 29, 2021

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The News: The Wisconsin Senate and Assembly passed two transparency bills, supported by the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL), that provide citizens with fresh access to public school curriculum material and financial information. These bills now move to Governor Evers for the opportunity to be signed into law. Why WILL Supports Public School Spending Transparency ([SB373 / AB378](#)): Before citizens can know what is working at the school and district-level they need the proper tools. The first step is accessible, uniform information on public school district spending.

- Wisconsin's current system does not provide enough transparency on public school spending. It is nearly impossible to meaningfully compare one school district's expenditures to another since the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) only reports information on general finance data for school districts.
- Transparency legislation improves the existing requirement for the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a "uniform financial fund accounting system" for public schools. The current system requires districts to report school spending data in large buckets, like instruction and administration. However, there is no requirement that the current system provide transparency of specific expenditures at the school level or across the district. This legislation takes existing information reported by the public schools and makes it accessible for the public.
- Transparency legislation requires DPI to display and promote information on a user-friendly website. The current system is confusing and not user-friendly. The bill requires DPI to collect data at least annually and upload to a website that allows the public to access, sort, and download school district information

relating to local, state and federal funds.

- Who Supports Public School Spending Transparency? WILL partnered with the Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) and ExcelinEd in Action in supporting and advancing this legislation with bill authors Senator Mary Felzkowski, and Reps. Gae Magnafici and Robert Wittke. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) are also supporting the legislation.

Why WILL Supports Curriculum Transparency Legislation ([SB463 / AB488](#)):

Curriculum transparency will ensure that parents, families, taxpayers, and lawmakers can know exactly what is being taught in the classroom. After hearing reports from parents that curriculum material was difficult to access via open records requests, WILL issued identical open records requests to nine large Wisconsin school districts and experienced, first-hand, the cost, time, and difficulty of accessing curriculum material.

- Curriculum transparency legislation requires districts to be forthright in providing access to curriculum material online. Each semester classroom materials, such as teacher-created PowerPoints, videos, and handouts, used for student instruction or student activities, must be put on an accessible platform accessed from the district's homepage.
- Complying with the statute would not be a reproduction of any copyrighted materials. Other than materials created by a teacher or district employee, the legislation requires only information to identify the specific learning materials used, including the title and the author, organization, or internet address associated with each material and activity.
- The bill applies to all classrooms and does not limit the educational topics. The legislation requires the posting of materials from all topics. This will inform interested parents about the learning materials used in classroom or on any specific topic, such as reading, health education, or civics.
- This bill addresses the concern that materials are not made available to parents and taxpayers. WILL's open records requests resulted in fees of hundreds, if not, thousands of dollars. For example, an open records request to Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) for materials from just a handful of teachers' materials, limited to specific search terms, resulted in charge at least \$10,000 to complete the search.
- Who Supports Curriculum Transparency? WILL partnered with the Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) and the Goldwater Institute in supporting and advancing this legislation with bill authors Sen. Duey Stroebel and Rep. Elijah

Behnke. Many parents from around the state joined the coalition in support of this legislation.

What's Next? These bills will be messaged to Governor Evers where he'll have the opportunity to sign them into law.

Read More:

- [WILL Testimony on Public School Spending Transparency](#), September 15, 2021
- [WILL Testimony on Curriculum Transparency](#), August 11, 2021
- [Opening the Schoolhouse Door: Promoting Curriculum Transparency](#), Will Flanders and Jessica Holmberg, May 26, 2021
- [The Case for Public School Spending Transparency in Wisconsin](#), February 2020