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DANIEL M. ROSSMILLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education
FROM: Christopher Kulow, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: January 8, 2026
RE: ASSEMBLY BILL 678, school board policies on appropriate communication with pupils.

WASB appreciates the overall intent of the legislation and supports the goals it seeks to achieve. As an organization that values local control, we also appreciate that the bill is not overly prescriptive and allows school boards the flexibility to tailor policies to their local circumstances.

Although recent news coverage and increased interest from state policymakers may make this appear to be a new issue, it is not new for schools. School boards have long recognized the need for policies addressing appropriate communication and professional boundaries between pupils and staff, and many districts have already adopted such policies. This bill may require some districts to update existing policies to reflect its specific language, and to the extent it prompts boards to review and strengthen their policies, it is beneficial.

However, we have concerns with the requirement that “the school board shall include in the policy specific consequences for employees and volunteers who violate the policy.” Compliance with this provision would be challenging, as violations can vary widely in severity and warrant different responses. Attempting to predetermine specific consequences for every potential scenario may be impractical and could complicate the disciplinary process.

We recommend removing this requirement. If there is strong support for retaining a reference to consequences, we suggest revising the language to read: “The school board shall include in the policy *a range of consequences, up to and including termination*, for employees and volunteers who violate the policy.”

Additionally, the bill could be strengthened by requiring the governing bodies of independent charter schools and private schools to adopt similar policies. In its current form, the bill applies only to public school boards. All students, regardless of the school system they attend, are vulnerable to potential grooming behaviors and should be protected through their school’s official policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this legislation. We hope you will consider these suggestions. Protecting children is a shared priority, and we appreciate efforts to advance this common goal for all Wisconsinites.