Re: Support of Assembly Bill 828/ Senate Bill 833

Assembly Bill 828 and its companion bill, SB 833, would create a program under which DPI provides grants to school counselors for the costs of continuing education and training in mental and behavioral health.

The Wisconsin League of Women Voters Education position statements indicate that by having well trained staff working in our public schools we promote educational equity and access to educational opportunities for each child through nondiscriminatory policies and an equitable state aids formula while retaining substantial program and personnel responsibilities in the local district.

Providing grants for school counselor training in mental and behavioral health is crucial to address surging student mental health needs, overcome funding limitations, and ensure specialized care in high-need or rural schools. Benefits of grants include: enhance student well-being, improve academic outcomes, reduce safety risks, and combat burnout by supporting training programs that, in some cases, cover significant tuition costs, fees for books, and stipends for internships, making specialized education more accessible. Trained counselors can identify and treat mental health issues early, which directly correlates to better academic performance and decreased absenteeism enhancing student mental health and academic outcomes. Many schools lack the budget for extensive staff training. Grants ultimately ensure that school counselors are equipped to handle complex behavioral and mental health challenges, providing better support for students and families. Counselor training is critical because it equips counselors to dismantle systemic barriers, mitigate personal biases, and advocate for historically marginalized students. Effective training ensures equitable access to opportunities, culturally affirming support for diverse identities, and improved academic/mental health outcomes for underserved populations.