



February 13, 2014

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to express our district's concerns with SB 525 regarding special education vouchers. This bill both endangers the legal rights of families and undercuts the services we provide for special education students in our public schools.

We have several concerns with the bill.

- **It jeopardizes legal rights:** Children are guaranteed certain rights and protections in public schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. By using special needs vouchers in a private school, those protections are not guaranteed to families and students.
- **It takes resources away from public school services for special education:** Special education vouchers would take taxpayer funding out of public schools, by decreasing the overall state aid to public schools. That could harm the services we provide to students with disabilities who remain in our schools or force tax increases in our local communities.
- **It endangers equal opportunities for students with disabilities:** Private schools are not required to accept any student. For example, a private school could turn away students with more severe disabilities but still receive taxpayer funding for other students. That would put in danger programs for students with disabilities who remain in Madison schools.

At the same time, other legislation would support our schools and our special needs students. SB 554 and SB 559 would help ensure all special needs students get the services and support they deserve. I hope you will consider advancing legislation that provides that support rather than endangering the legal rights of our students and families and undercutting the services we provide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Cheatham

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Cheatham".

Jennifer Cheatham, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Madison Metropolitan School District