



SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



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REP. POPE: HIRING OF UW CHARTER “CZAR” IS GOP CRONYISM AT ITS WORST

MADISON –Earlier today, Representative Sondy Pope (D-Cross Plains) made a statement regarding the UW-System hiring of Gary Bennett –chief of staff for Joint Finance co-chair Sen. Alberta Darling (R –River Hills) - to lead and oversee the creation of the Office of Educational Opportunity. This office was created by Republican legislators and will have the ability to authorize new independent charter schools in Madison and Milwaukee, without the input or approval from local school boards.

“It is appalling to me that Wisconsin has fallen so deep into Governor Walker’s brand of blatant cronyism that a legislative office can create an unnecessary, high-level position, and then miraculously have its own chief of staff hired to fill the position.”

Independent charter schools reduce public school funding at a rate of about \$8,000 per student. Prior to this legislation being rammed through the budget last year, chartering authority was left to local school boards.

“This legislation was a clear attack on Madison, Milwaukee and local control,” said Rep. Pope. “Policy such as this will open the floodgates for unaccountable, for-profit charters to further drain much-needed resources from our public schools. For now, this policy only applies to our two largest urban school districts, but this administration has a habit of sneaking laws in through the back door and this terrible idea could expand quickly.”

“Governor Walker has set a poor example and precedent for his fellow Republicans,” Rep. Pope said. “His pattern of hiring political cronies who are often found to be unqualified has now spilled over into our children’s education. This type of political gamesmanship has no place in governance and certainly no place in the classroom.”