



SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



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Contact: Rep. Sondy Pope
608-266-3520

REP. POPE : SCHOOL CHOICE WISCONSIN DESPERATE TO JUSTIFY VOUCHERS **Bender Cites Questionable Study and Cherry-Picked Conclusions**

MADISON – Earlier today, Representative Sondy Pope (D-Cross Plains) responded to a release from the pro-voucher group School Choice Wisconsin. In the release, President Jim Bender cites a biased study out of The University of Arkansas (UA), which was not peer reviewed, to make a virtually unfounded claim that unaccountable voucher schools somehow lower crime rates among males post-graduation. Noticeably, there are no claims of improved academic performance.

“Mr. Bender has repeatedly tried, and failed, to provide convincing evidence that voucher schools are academically superior to public schools,” said Rep. Pope. “In order to obfuscate this failure, Mr. Bender has shifted his focus to an obscure, weak study on post-graduation crime rates. This tactic is not only misleading but appears to be an act of desperation.”

The faculty at the UA who published the [report](#) admits the study’s own shortcomings and attempts to justify the claim with little more than biased assertions. They seemingly discredit their own conclusions. Page 29 of the report states:

We cannot assume causality regarding the relationship between the voucher program and crime and must, instead, infer causality. We think that causal inference is justified in this case because: (1) there are strong theoretical reasons to expect that private schooling through a voucher program will reduce criminal behavior... (5) No previous experimental or quasi-experimental study of the effect of school vouchers and crime exists. Although our study is not perfect, it is the best study yet conducted on whether or not access to private schooling through vouchers leads to reductions in criminal behavior.

“The ‘science’ presented in this report is laughable,” Rep. Pope said. “‘Strong theoretical reasons’ do not amount to evidence and the absence of previous research on a topic does not validate weak research. To claim that your study is ‘the best study yet’ when it is the only study of its kind completely throws academic credibility out the window.”

“I agree that ‘school culture matters.’ Parents want a school culture in which teachers have passed background checks and are properly trained and licensed. They want a school culture that guarantees their child’s school won’t close and disappear in the dead of night. Most



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importantly, parents want a school culture that is of the highest quality and accountable to the very citizens whose taxes fund it.”

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