



LEAH VUKMIR

STATE Senator

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For Immediate Release

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Vukmir Works to Reform Educational Options for Special Needs Students

(Madison, WI) Special needs families will be provided more educational choices under a motion advanced by Senator Leah Vukmir (R-Wauwatosa) and passed by the Joint Committee on Finance early Wednesday morning. The effort will improve special education in both the public and private school settings, by reforming both the open enrollment and statewide voucher programs. The committee also approved the first increase in special education aid in eight years.

The centerpiece of the proposal is the creation of a Special Needs Scholarship that will finally give parents a true choice between a public school failing to meet their child's goals and a private school. Children that have been denied open enrollment will now have the ability to transfer to a qualified private school.

Senator Vukmir said the Special Needs Scholarship will give parents and students options in choosing the best private school to meet the student's educational needs. "These children and families are trapped. Their public school has failed them, and their chance of open enrollment has been taken away. We are giving families hope that their children can finally get the education they deserve," Vukmir said.

The motion also makes needed changes to the state's open enrollment program. Currently, school districts can deny an open enrollment application for a special needs child. This has led to 44% of special needs families becoming trapped in a public school not meeting their child's needs. The resident school district will no longer be able to deny a special needs student from taking advantage of the highly popular open enrollment program.

"We are finally creating true choice for our special needs students," Vukmir said. "Families have been trying to work within the open enrollment program to move their children out of a public school that has failed them. Unfortunately, they have had the door slammed in their face time and time again. We are now breaking that door down."

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