



## Sample Board Resolution on Participation in Sports and Extra-Curricular Activities

**WHEREAS**, athletics and other extra-curricular activities offered in public schools (and in many private schools as well) are, as the name suggests, intended to supplement the school curriculum. In this regard, athletics, drama, forensics and other activities are viewed as an extension of the classroom and of the school day and are specific to each respective school or district; and

**WHEREAS**, schools provide athletics and other extra-curricular activities because they have educational value and create incentives for students to enroll in and remain in public schools and perform well enough to remain eligible to participate in those activities; and

**WHEREAS**, school activities reduce truancy, reduce discipline referrals, and boost students' grades (GPA) and graduation rates and keep students engaged in school offerings and interested in their education.

**WHEREAS**, a budget provision adopted by the Joint Finance Committee would undercut these incentives as described herein by requiring all public school programs to give equal access to students regardless of their families' educational choice preferences; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposal would also prohibit a public school district from being a member of an athletic association (such as the WIAA) unless the association requires member school districts to permit home-based, private, charter and virtual charter pupils to participate in athletic activities in the district; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposal ignores that public schools exert institutional control (by requiring such things as school attendance, certain levels of academic standing or grade point averages, and adherence to codes of conduct) over who may participate in such activities and are accountable for how those activities are conducted; and

**WHEREAS**, this proposal is opposed by the Wisconsin Parent Association, which represents parents of homeschooled students, one of the major groups the provision purports to be aimed at helping because they do not want to trade their homeschooling freedoms for the possibility of a small number of homeschoolers participating in public school sports and fear that increased state regulation of homeschoolers who participate in public school sports would inevitably lead to increased state regulation of all homeschooled students; and

**WHEREAS**, the Joint Finance Committee proposal also ignores that school-based athletic programs are not community or recreational youth sports programs and are not designed to provide the general public with programming like a YMCA or community-based recreation program; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the primary reasons the WIAA, a voluntary association, was formed in 1896 by school principals as the nation's first state interscholastic athletic association was to address concerns about the practice of schools recruiting and using non-students (members of the community not enrolled in those schools) on their athletic teams and to regulate such practices and provide uniformity of rules and fairness for its member schools. This proposal would undercut that goal; and

**WHEREAS**, in order to be eligible to participate in school athletics at a WIAA member school, the student must be a full-time student at that school and adhere to the academic and athletic codes of conduct required by membership in the Association; and

**WHEREAS**, student athletes in WIAA member schools have to meet a number of additional conditions to be eligible, including residency requirements, age and consecutive semester restrictions, amateur status stipulations, regularly maintained attendance, conduct conformity, satisfactory academic standing and physical fitness. Each school has the institutional responsibility for compliance with the rules of their membership, and in the absence of any other authority for state or local officials to regulate home-based education programs here in Wisconsin, athletic eligibility is not granted to anyone other than students enrolled full-time at a member school; and

**WHEREAS**, the WIAA has expanded opportunities and created eligibility for nontraditional school students while still preserving the most fundamental expectation: that students are enrolled full-time at the school they represent. For example, after years of planning, private schools were afforded a membership option in 2000, and some private school programs participated in WIAA Tournaments even before the membership expanded; eligibility was afforded for students in charter schools whose chartering authority lies with a member school in 2009; virtual school students counted as full-time at a member school are granted eligibility at their respective school of enrollment. In addition, private voucher school students are granted eligibility in accordance with WIAA membership rules. Schools also have the option to combine and compete with another member school for selected sports as a co-op; and

**WHEREAS**, in some parts of Wisconsin and in the many other states where the rules of eligibility are similar to Wisconsin's families that home-school their children are forming their own athletic associations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Joint Finance Committee proposal could diminish private schools' incentive to sponsor and sustain their own extra-curricular programs, which in turn could further limit roster space or participation opportunities for a public school's own students. The potential for those not enrolled in a public school to displace the public school's own students in extracurricular activities could drive a substantial wedge between public and private schools and between public schools and those who educate their children at home; and

**THEREFORE**, the \_\_\_\_\_ School Board opposes legislative efforts to mandate that public school districts provide students residing in the district who are not enrolled in the district schools access to district co-curricular activities.

The \_\_\_\_\_ School Board further urges that the provisions adopted by the Joint Finance Committee be removed from the state budget and approached in a more thoughtful manner that includes a public hearing and an opportunity for input by the public, by school boards, and by parents of public school students as well as parents of homeschooled students.