

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of Wisconsin
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers,

I write regarding the newly launched Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund announced April 14, 2020 by the U.S. Department of Education.

Wisconsin's estimated share of the GEER fund is \$45 million. Private schools are included as eligible recipients.

As you well know, ten percent of Wisconsin's K-12 students are enrolled in religious and independent schools. That's 100,000+ students in 800 schools.

WCRIS respectfully requests that you distribute ten percent (\$4.6 million) of the total amount to private K-12 schools, representing our share of state enrollment.

The model for disbursement could be the Wisconsin school safety grants, which was done effectively through the DOJ under both Republican and Democrat Attorneys General.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. That program provided private schools with nearly \$6.7 million for doors, locks, alarms, intercoms, etc. to ensure school safety.

It worked. An LAB report in December found the program well run with few problems and high accountability. The Legislature's joint audit review committee sung the praises of the program based on the LAB's findings.

Now, under the GEER Fund, aid would be used to stabilize Wisconsin private K-12 schools, in light of your Safer at Home order, which shuttered our doors.

As you may realize, expenses for school building heat, electricity, mortgage, insurance and staffing continue mounting, despite the fact that children are not allowed to attend.

Many families have ceased tuition payments because their children are no longer in school. Imagine the budget chaos if public school parents could similarly withhold their property tax payments because the public schools closed their doors!

Designating a proportionate share for private schools would be a smart investment, too. If there were no private schools, Wisconsin state and local taxes would have to rise more than \$1 billion annually to pay for the students' education in public schools.

Therefore, using a small portion of the GEER funds to equally support private schools will only help stabilize the state's K-12 education infrastructure.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian
Schools International

Christian Schools
International

Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

Diocese of Superior

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
North Wisconsin District

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference
of Seventh Day Adventists

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Northern Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Western Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Southeastern Wisconsin
District

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April 22, 2020
Schmeling, Page Two

I urge you to take this opportunity to provide equitable treatment to an important minority group that saves taxpayers substantial money at a critical time in our state's history.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing back from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon L. Schmeling". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Sharon L. Schmeling
Executive Director