



May 30, 2002

Senator Russell Decker  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Decker,

During a recent Conference Committee meeting you claimed that schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) don't enroll students with special education needs. You used this argument to justify 50% funding cuts that would close dozens of schools and transfer thousands of choice students to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

Your claim is incorrect. Many choice schools enroll children with special learning needs. Further, in contrast to the practice in many individual MPS schools, choice schools may not exclude an eligible MPCP student on the grounds of special education needs.

State law requires private schools to use a blind admissions policy with respect to MPCP applications. We may not "pick and choose" MPCP students. The parents choose us. This often includes parents of children with special learning needs who choose to not have their children "labeled" by the public system.

The range of disabilities among children we educate is wide. In many cases, MPS officials themselves have referred special needs students to us. In contrast to the public schools, we don't get additional funds for serving special needs children.

The stories of children we serve are illustrated in the attached excerpt of a report by Dr. Howard Fuller on the admission practices of MPS and MPCP schools. (*For the full report, go to [www.schoolchoiceinfo.org](http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org).*)

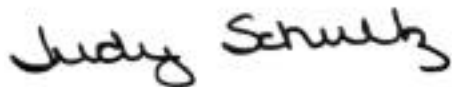
The examples in this report are but a sampling of the kind of special needs students that private schools serve daily as they educate children in the MPCP.

Some have cited a Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) report issued two years ago as showing that special needs students are underrepresented in MPCP schools. However, a careful reading of the LAB report, along with the knowledge that many MPCP schools don't explicitly classify students as having special needs, demonstrates that it is inappropriate to cite the LAB for such claims.

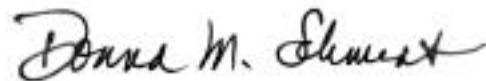
May 30, 2002  
Senator Russell Decker  
Page 2

On behalf of the many MPCP schools serving children with special needs, we urge you to correct your misstatement.

Sincerely,



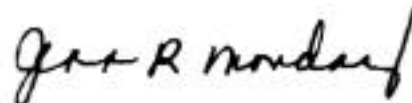
Judy Schultz, Principal  
Lutheran Special School



Donna Schmidt, Principal  
Prince of Peace Catholic School



Rob Rauh, Principal  
Marva Collins Preparatory School



Jeff Monday, Principal  
Messmer High School



Rick Pendergast, Principal  
Pius XI High School

cc: Wisconsin State Legislators  
Governor Scott McCallum