

To: Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, DPI

Date: March 10, 2015

Re: Statement in Opposition to Assembly Bill 64

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) offers the following statement in opposition to Assembly Bill 64 (AB 64), which allows technical colleges to authorize independent (2r) charter schools.

This proposal erodes local control and continues a flawed funding system for independent (2r) charter schools that pulls state aid from other public schools. Additionally, statewide expansion is unnecessary because Wisconsin is already a leader in charter school creation and technical college partnerships.

Funding Challenge: DPI's principle concern is that AB 64 would exacerbate the current independent charter funding problems, where each student generates \$8,075. This is a "first draw" against general school aid. Last year, general aid to every Wisconsin school district was reduced by 1.5 percent to fund independent (2r) charter schools. This reduction totaled over \$64 million for the 8,100 students attending independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine. School boards are allowed to replace this lost general aid with property taxes under their revenue limit. This funding flaw should be addressed before any expansion of the independent (2r) charter program is contemplated.

Plentiful Partnerships: Wisconsin currently has one of the highest numbers of charter schools in the nation, with over 220 charter schools. Many school districts enjoy strong partnerships with their local technical colleges, offering students dual enrollment and advanced credit opportunities.

These partnerships are an important component of career and technical education (CTE), helping students become college and career ready through innovative instruction on state of the art technical college equipment. Additionally, these partnerships help put students' creativity to work for local industry, create pools of local talent in communities, and make learning relevant and engaging to students. For example:

Northcentral Technical College, which serves Wausau and the surrounding region, collaborates with the Wausau School District to deliver more than 35 different courses for high school students in areas like manufacturing, welding, business, and health care; and

Baldwin-Woodville School District, OEM Fabricators, and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College created the Manufacturing Careers Pathway Partnership in 2010 to expose middle and high school students to advanced manufacturing through career exploration, job shadowing, youth employment, state of the art training facilities, dual enrollment, and tuition assistance.

These are just two of the hundreds of innovative partnerships that allow high school students to explore career opportunities and earn technical college credits. More than 90,000 students are currently taking CTE courses in fields like manufacturing, agriculture, business, family and consumer science, health occupations, marketing, technology, and engineering. AB 64, as drafted, could undermine these partnerships by undermining local school boards and drawing general school aid from successful districts.