

Date: October 8, 2015

To: Members, Assembly Committee on Education

From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, Department of Public Instruction

RE: Statement on AB 338

Assembly Bill 338 (AB 338) requires the Milwaukee Public School District to apply for a grant to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) on behalf of the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (the Institute). The purpose of this grant is to conduct a summer reading program in the summers following the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years called the Milwaukee Summer Reading Project (the Project). The bill would fund the Project with \$375,000 in FY16 and \$750,000 in FY17 for a total of \$1.125 million over the biennium.

The Project was established in 2010 by the Institute and is administered by Dr. Howard Fuller, a former superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools. The Project focuses on improving reading achievement over a six-week period during the summer and preventing summer regression.

DPI agrees that a solid foundation in reading is crucial to a child's success, and summer regression is a serious concern. Summer school programs are critical and help encourage reading outside the normal school year and may help improve reading achievement and prevent summer regression. The State Superintendent is supportive of participation in summer school and enrichment programs and providing additional funding in this area. In fact, DPI's 2015-17 budget request included a proposal aimed at increasing reading achievement through Milwaukee Succeeds.

DPI respects the work of all Wisconsin literacy experts, including Dr. Fuller and the Institute. In fact, the Institute is a past recipient of a grant through the existing statewide literacy initiative, the Read to Lead Council. There are existing funds in the Read to Lead Council budget, and we suggest that rather than making a new appropriation, those funds be considered for this use.

Further, if the legislature wishes to provide an additional appropriation, DPI suggests the existing Read to Lead Council be utilized. It was created in 2011 by Governor Walker to promote reading and literacy by providing the kind of grants proposed in this bill. Council membership consists of Governor Walker, the State Superintendent, legislators, teachers, business and philanthropic representatives, and literacy experts and is a public-private partnership. Using this Read to Lead Council and building upon an already existing relationship would streamline processes and be the most effective method to distribute the funds.

We are happy to discuss this with you further at any time.