

SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIPS

Myths and Facts about AB 110

Special interests in Washington DC have hired expensive lobbyists who also represent large corporate interests including, General Motors and Proctor & Gamble to try to pull the wool over the eyes of parents of children with disabilities. They allege that their interest is, "To advocate for parental options in education that empowers low and middle-income families to make choices in where they send their children to school."¹ These high powered special interests have never approached Disability Rights Wisconsin or any other major Wisconsin disability group to learn from those of us who have been advocating for Wisconsin children with disabilities for over 30 years, to find out what really needs improvement Wisconsin's special education system. Instead, they have set up a Facebook site which fails to tell the whole truth about the bill they promote. This fact sheet tells the whole truth about AB 110 and its effort to dismantle special education as we know it and subsidize middle and upper income families who want to send their kids to private school at taxpayer expense.

Myth # 1—AB 110 allows parents the option to choose any other school they want their child to attend if they are unsatisfied with the special education being provided in their public school.

Fact—AB 110 has no requirement in it that forces any school to accept a child who has a special needs voucher.

Myth # 2—Since only children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) can receive a special needs scholarship, private schools who accept them must provide them with special education and implement the child's IEP.

Facts—AB 110 makes no requirement that private schools which accept a special needs scholarship provide any special education or implement any IEP. In fact, AB 110 does not even require that private schools which accept special needs scholarships have a single special education teacher or therapist on their staff!

Myth # 3—Parents of children with disabilities in Ohio and Florida which have special needs scholarship programs are very satisfied with it.

Fact—The truth is, just as in our current public schools, some parents in Ohio and Florida like their special needs scholarship programs and some do not and have returned their children to

¹See lobbying Statement of Interest for Washington DC based American Federation for Children.

public schools after finding out that private schools provided little or no special education for their children.

Myth # 4—My child will retain his special education rights in private school if he attends with a special needs voucher.

Fact—Sadly, using a special needs voucher to attend private school means that parents and their children give up ALL their state and federal rights to special education, including: 1) the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE); 2) the right to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE); 3) the right to transition services to ensure a successful transition to adult life; and 4) the right not to be disciplined for 10 or more days or expelled for behavior which is a result of the child’s disability. In fact, we can expect that if AB 110 passes, our schools will go backwards away from 30 years of progress in inclusion of children with disabilities, and become increasingly segregated.

Myth #5—AB 110 will provide enough money to the private school to make sure it educates my child properly.

Fact—Unlike in Florida, where special education is funded on a 5 tier per pupil system, Wisconsin funds special education services, not students. AB 110 simply punts the funding to the Department of Public Instruction to determine how much each child’s special needs scholarship is worth, with no guarantee that it will be enough for the private school to properly educate the child, and no requirement that the private school use that funding to fund the special education which the child needs.

Myth # 6—AB 110 provides the option to low income families to send their children with disabilities to private school just like wealthy families already have.

Fact—Nothing could be further from the truth. AB 110 has no income caps, so whether a family makes a million dollars/year, or is homeless, they would get the same special needs scholarship. Worse yet, AB 110 has no requirement forbidding private schools from charging parents tuition which exceeds the value of their special needs scholarship. So, AB 110 is really a subsidy for middle and upper income families at taxpayer expense, and denies low income families the right which their children with disabilities currently have—a FREE appropriate public education.

TAKE ACTION: Call your legislators and encourage them to vote NO on AB 110!
1-800-362-9472
Attend the Assembly Education hearing at the Capitol, on Tuesday, May 3rd, starting at 10 AM, in Room 417 North.

TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT AB 110!

MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD!

PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES!