



May 4, 2011

Tony Evers, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
c/o DPI Charter School Consultant Barry Golden
barry.golden@dpi.wi.gov
125 S. Webster Street,
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Dear Dr. Evers,

We write regarding the application for a charter school planning grant that we understand is to be submitted to your agency by the Urban League of Greater Madison for formation of the Madison Preparatory school, an all-boys' International Baccalaureate (IB) school.

We are acutely aware of the educational inequities currently faced by school children in Madison, particularly African-American children, and recognize that new educational opportunities are desperately needed in this community. However, because girls as well as boys in Madison suffer from educational disadvantage, we strongly believe that such a unique opportunity can and should be made equally available to boys and girls in a coeducational setting. Therefore, while we would applaud a proposal to found a coeducational IB school in the Madison school district, we cannot support the Madison Prep proposal as currently structured¹ because it excludes girls from the significant benefits it promises to offer, and is not in compliance with federal and local laws on non-discrimination, state law on single-sex charter schools and school district policy on non-discrimination.

We enclose a letter that was previously sent to the members of the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education outlining our concerns regarding the proposal in more detail. As we stated in that letter, the justification for sex segregation in education rests on unproven theories about the different brain structures and learning styles of boys and girls, and on claims of educational benefit that have not been borne out by valid social science research. Claims that boys and girls learn and develop so differently that they are best educated separately have no valid scientific basis, are belied by countless successful coeducational programs, and amount to little more than repackaged sex stereotypes that have pernicious effects when they are employed in a classroom setting. And while some

¹ Although we have not seen the proposal that is currently under consideration by DPI, we base our comments on the proposal that was previously submitted to the Madison School District Board of Education Planning and Development Committee on December 13, 2010. Recent, publicly available reports regarding the proposal suggest that it has not changed in relevant respects since that time.

**American Civil
Liberties Union
of Wisconsin Foundation
State Headquarters**
207 E. Buffalo St.,
Suite 325
Milwaukee, WI 53202-5774
T/ 414-272-4032
F/ 414272-0182

**American Civil
Liberties Union
of Wisconsin Foundation
Madison Area Office**
P.O. Box 687
Madison, WI 53701-0687
T/ 608-469-5540

www.ACLU-WI.org

single-sex programs have undoubtedly shown some successes, there is no proof that those successes were a result of the single-sex structure; rather, these programs tend to share other factors such as limited class size that *are* correlated with improved educational achievement, all of which can be and have been applied in a coeducational setting.

Our concerns are not allayed by the proposal's mention of vague plans to start a similar preparatory school for girls in the future. Especially in the current fiscal climate, there is no guarantee that such funds would be made available. Prioritizing a boys-only program now runs the risk of sacrificing the girls in both the short- and long-terms. This is an unacceptable risk, given the current, urgent need for improved educational options for both boys *and* girls in urban Madison, and the lack of justification for sex segregation in the first instance.

Therefore, we ask that you reject the current proposal for a charter school planning grant, or alternatively, that you approve it only on the condition that the proposal be modified to make the school open to girls as well as boys, in a coeducational setting.

Sincerely,

Karyn Rotker
ACLU of Wisconsin
Senior Staff Attorney

Stacy Harbaugh
ACLU of Wisconsin
Madison Area Office

Enclosure