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Alderman, 8th District

# Instead of lifting residency requirement, let's expand school choice and fix the "funding flaw"

## Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan January 25, 2013

As a city leader, I recognize how critically important it is that we have a city that is not only attractive, but that is also a place where people truly want to live. The last thing we want is for people or businesses to be clamoring to leave our city.

**Today I am proposing bold moves that I believe will help attract and retain working people and families here in Milwaukee. I am calling on the state Legislature to expand the school choice program here in our city (as well as fix the "funding flaw"), and a letter I've sent to Governor Scott Walker and the Legislature regarding the proposals is attached.**

I will elaborate on my proposals in a moment. But first, let's look at some of the key reasons I believe people most often cite for deciding not to live in Milwaukee:

\*\*Crime/public safety

\*\*Milwaukee Public Schools

\*\*Taxes

The last time I checked, we weren't doing so hot in any of those categories. However, in my many discussions with residents, it is the continued failures of MPS that they find so alarming and the most serious and immediate threat to the future of the city. In short, many families are exploring relocation or non-MPS options almost entirely once their children reach school age.

Those families are looking for other options and choices, and I say we need to give them those options – right here in Milwaukee!

-More-

Instead of forcing working families to look at moving out of the city or enrolling their children in expensive parochial schools (usually thousands of dollars per year for K-8, and even tens of thousands of dollars per year for high school), it is time to give these middle-income and upper-middle-income Milwaukee families relief from the school hardship factor.

**Milwaukee needs to become a city that is attractive to middle-income and upper-middle-income families of all races.** I believe my proposal – to lift all income restrictions for the school choice program in Milwaukee – is liberating and opens up many options for our working families (much like the GI Bill has provided huge educational opportunities for the men and women serving in the armed forces). This change will also go a long way toward addressing the complaints about city and MPS residency requirements.

Lifting the school choice income restrictions could set Milwaukee apart (no other large city offers open “true choice”) and could make our city an increasingly attractive destination for working families (and businesses).

I am also calling on the Governor and the Legislature to help fix the school choice “funding flaw.” The end result of the “funding flaw” is MPS is forced to raise property taxes to offset its loss of revenue and to maintain its per-pupil expenditures. These higher taxes further reduce the attractiveness of Milwaukee to current and potential future middle-class residents and homeowners.

By expanding school choice in Milwaukee, and by correcting the “funding flaw,” the State of Wisconsin can directly address the concerns of city and MPS employees subject to residency requirements, while also contributing positively to the overall stability and economic well-being of its largest city.