In a democracy, public education cannot be privately controlled

As Election Day approaches, there are a number of issues facing Wisconsin that could have profound long term consequences for our state. We encourage all voters to think about the future of public schools in their community. Will your family and your community be better off with a strong public school system, or with a new voucher-driven system of private education run by corporate interests?

Wisconsin has a long tradition of first class public schools, from K-12 to a world class university. Everyone knows that high quality public schools help kids get ahead in life, prop up home values, and are key to our state’s long-term economic growth and success. But instead of investing in our future, Wisconsin is cutting our educational infrastructure.

Three years ago the state imposed unprecedented reductions in per pupil funding for public school students. In the next budget, the administration then proposed a zero dollar per pupil increase for public school students, while it substantially increased funding for private voucher school students. This disparate treatment of public and private school students reflects priorities of the current administration, which also then expanded the voucher system—once restricted to Milwaukee—to schools statewide.

Today, many candidates are already on record supporting the elimination of enrollment caps for the new statewide voucher program. The intent is clear: they want to create a separate parallel system of privately controlled education in our state.

Three key questions about public education need to be asked of any candidate before you vote this election.

- After the largest public school cuts in state history, do you support per pupil funding for our students that at least keeps pace with the cost of living moving forward?

- Should Wisconsin continue to support its high quality public school system as our top educational priority, or do you support creating a new statewide system of private and for-profit schools?

- If you chose the second option, how do you propose to fund a full blown statewide voucher system that will cost hundreds of millions in tax dollars once implemented?

We believe that public schools offer the best hope to recreate the shared prosperity that our state once had. Private schools tend to benefit families with the most resources and will further pull our state apart, while depriving public schools of needed resources. Now is not the time to create a whole new program of massive subsidies for private and for-profit schools; now is the time to invest in Wisconsin’s children and a brighter future.