

JOINT STATEMENT ON S.138 BY THE MILWAUKEE JEWISH COUNCIL AND
THE WISCONSIN REGIONAL BOARD OF THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

March 3, 1971

The Milwaukee Jewish Council is the community relations organization of the Jewish community of Milwaukee. Its constituent organizations are among the most important in the American Jewish community. They include the Milwaukee organizations of B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Jewish Labor Committee and the Jewish War Veterans. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith serves in a similar capacity on a statewide level. The program of both organizations is religious and educational and is in large measure aimed at the preservation of equal rights and our democratic values.

We appear to oppose S.138 because we believe that two fundamental principles of our democracy are endangered by the proposal to provide aid to parochial and private schools in Wisconsin:

1. The doctrine of separation of church and state as guaranteed by the U.S. and the Wisconsin Constitutions - is the keystone of religious freedom in the United States. S.138 violates that principle.
2. The first responsibility of government is to provide the best possible public schools open freely and equally to all children without regard to race or religion or economic status. S.138 threatens the future of public education in Wisconsin.

We uphold the right of parents to make a choice for the kind of education which meets their "private" religious needs. But, it is not a function of government to support that "private" need. Further, to provide public funds for parochial schools will necessarily entail an intrusion by the State into religious affairs and interference with the very religious identity of these schools.

It is the function of government to provide a strong and forward looking educational system open to all children without regard to race or creed - or handicap - physical, emotional or otherwise. However, the public schools in our state, in our central cities and in many rural parts of the State, are now experiencing financial and social crisis. They are finding it more difficult every day to provide the vast majority of children who attend the public schools with the kind of education they will need to become contributing citizens of our society.

The public schools of the cities are today faced with profound social and economic problems; race relations, the more insistent demands of the disadvantaged for better education, the erosion of their tax base by the departure of middle class families for the suburbs. These schools which desperately need more funds, are now being asked to share what is available with private schools. Under the provisions of S.138, all parents of private school children will benefit, including the affluent. The diversion of our limited resources to private schools thus, profoundly threatens the future of public education.

We believe that S.138 will set a precedent which will ultimately lead to parity of support for public and private schools and the balkanization of education in our state. Private schools will increase, and judging by the national experience they will tend to be the schools of the white middle class. The public schools, especially in the central cities, will become the schools of the poor and the disadvantaged. Because private schools can be selective, emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped and disruptive children will be left to the public schools increasing their financial and social burdens.

March 2, 1941

The Milwaukee Jewish Council is the community religious organization of the Jewish community of Milwaukee. Its constituent organizations are among the most important in the American Jewish community. They include the Milwaukee Organization for Jewish Education, American Jewish Congress, Jewish Labor Council, and the Jewish War Veterans. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith is also an important organization in the Milwaukee Jewish community. The program of this organization is to provide religious and educational aid to Jewish youth in the Milwaukee area.

We support the proposed S. 133 because we believe that the fundamental principles of our democracy are endangered by the proposal to provide aid to parochial and sectarian schools in Wisconsin.

1. The proposed legislation is a violation of the principle of separation of church and state as established by the U.S. Constitution - in the instance of religious institutions and the United States S. 133 violates this principle.

2. The proposed legislation is a violation of the principle of equality of opportunity for all citizens and equally to all children without regard to race or religion or economic status. S. 133 threatens the future of public education in Wisconsin.

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It is the function of government to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It is the function of government to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It is the function of government to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It is the function of government to provide for the welfare of its citizens. It is the function of government to provide for the welfare of its citizens.

The public schools of the State of Wisconsin are the most important institutions in the State. They are the most important institutions in the State. They are the most important institutions in the State. They are the most important institutions in the State. They are the most important institutions in the State.

We believe that S. 133 will do a great deal of harm to the public schools of the State. We believe that S. 133 will do a great deal of harm to the public schools of the State. We believe that S. 133 will do a great deal of harm to the public schools of the State. We believe that S. 133 will do a great deal of harm to the public schools of the State. We believe that S. 133 will do a great deal of harm to the public schools of the State.

We are aware that many parochial schools are closing because of a decline in enrollment. The Minority Report of the Task Force on Private Education of the Kellett Commission states that financial difficulty is not the sole reason for that decline. "We do not believe that the decline in Catholic school enrollment will be materially affected by any kind of reasonable public financial support", the Minority Report states. But the public will be carrying the increased burden of aid to parochial schools as well as the cost of crossover to the public schools. There are also the hidden costs of administering a vastly increased program of financial and educational accountability. In the long run, we believe it is a delusion that S.138 will save taxes.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council and the Anti-Defamation League are mindful of the plight of some private religiously related schools which serve low income families. We believe it is possible to meet the needs of children in these schools in a way which is both constitutional and not destructive of public education. The provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which provide for special educational services and arrangements in which pupils in private schools can also participate. These special services can be provided through dual enrollment, through educational radio and television or mobile educational services and equipment. Special arrangements may include broadened health services, school breakfasts for poor children, and guidance and counseling. Shared time programs are also recommended. These services must be administered under public auspices and should be more fully exploited for the benefit of children of low income families. This recommendation has also been made by the Kellett Commission.

Finally, we are aware that there is support for private schools because there are many who feel that public education has failed. This is especially true of parents of "central city" minority group children for whom these public schools are "grim, oppressive and joyless" in the words of the Carnegie Report on Education. We believe these children must look to the public schools first, as a matter of fundamental right, to meet their changing needs. But there must be a spirit of educational innovation and a willingness to involve parents in educational decision making. And there must be greater resources available.

In the interest of education and religious freedom we urge the defeat of S.138.

We are aware that many parochial schools are closing because of a decline in enrollment. The Minority Report of the Task Force on Private Education of the Kellie Commission states that financial difficulty is not the sole reason for this decline. We do not believe that the decline in Catholic school enrollment will be materially affected by any kind of taxonomic public financial support. The Minority Report states that the public will be carrying the increased burden of aid to parochial schools as well as the cost of conversion to the public schools. There are also the hidden costs of administering a vastly increased program of financial and educational accountability. In the long run, we believe it is a decision that will be taken.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council and the Anti-Defamation League are mindful of the rights of some private religiously related schools which serve low income families. We believe it is possible to meet the needs of children in these schools in a way which is both cost-effective and non-discriminatory of public education. The provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which provide for special educational services and arrangements in which public and private schools can also participate. These special services can be provided through local enrollment, through educational radio and television or mobile educational services and equipment. Special arrangements may include pre-arranged health services, school breakfasts for poor children, and guidance and counseling. Other such programs are also recommended. These services must be provided under public auspices and should be more fully expanded for the benefit of children of low income families. This recommendation has also been made by the Kellie Commission.

Finally, we are aware that there is support for private schools because there are many who feel that public education has failed. This is especially true of parents of "special city" children group children for whom there are public schools and "special expressive and language" in the words of the Kellie report on education. We believe these children must look to public schools first, as an alternative to their current situation. We believe that there must be a change in public opinion and a willingness to involve parents in education. There must be greater resources available.

In the long run, we believe that the decision and religious freedom we urge the defeat of S. 138.