

MEMORANDUM

**TO: Assembly Committee on Government Operations and State Licensing
Senate Committee on Government Operations, Public Works and
Telecommunications.**

**FROM: Wisconsin School Social Workers Association
Wisconsin Jewish Conference
Wisconsin Council of Churches
Southeast Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist Congregations
Southeastern United Church of Christ Southeast Wisconsin Association
National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter
NAACP Milwaukee Branch
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation
Islamic Society of Milwaukee
Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee
Cream City Foundation
American Civil Liberties Union**

DATE: October 8, 2013

RE: AB 297/SB 317, Race-based nicknames, logos, mascots

We write to urge the Legislature to maintain current law for challenging the use of race-based nicknames and mascots established by 2009 Wisconsin Act 250.

We oppose the use of racial, ethnic or cultural stereotypes in the names or mascots used by school districts, especially when the affected group has not chosen the name itself and disagrees with its use.

These depictions of minority groups do not promote tradition or respect, but rather a belief that the use of demeaning symbols and stereotypes are okay. Stereotyping not only affects how those discriminated against are treated by others, but also how they come to view themselves. This, in turn, creates an environment in which acts of intolerance and hate become more acceptable.

The use of such damaging racial stereotypes by educational institutions creates unhealthy learning environments and perpetuates cultural bias and prejudice. We believe that our schools should be inclusive communities where all cultures, religions and individuals are treated with respect.

We reject the use of racial, religious, ethnic or other stereotyping and call on the Legislature to do the same. The provisions of Senate Bill 317 and Assembly Bill 297, along with the proposed modifications to the bill, make it easier for school districts to continue using discriminatory nicknames.

We call on the Legislature to maintain current law.

Thank you for your consideration.

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