



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

March 21, 2024

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 549 in its entirety.

Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, this bill requires the principal of a public school or independent charter school to schedule at least one date and time (which may be noninstructional time) at the start of the school year upon request of a federally chartered youth membership organization to allow the organization to visit the school and encourage students to join the organization.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to undermining local decision-making regarding whether organizations may visit school buildings to recruit students for membership. I have long supported the important work of youth organizations designed to promote civic participation, good citizenry, and lifelong skills of respect, leadership, and service. However, I cannot support legislation that strips locally elected school board officials, administrators, and school principals of existing decision-making authority to determine permissible entry to school grounds during the instructional day or after.

Additionally, this bill may conflict with existing federal law. The 1984 Equal Access Act requires a federally funded public secondary school that permits at least one noncurriculum-related student group to meet on school premises during noninstructional time to provide equal access to all student organizations, regardless of viewpoint, philosophy, or speech. A state mandate requiring access to schools for a small, specific list of organizations may run afoul of the right of other groups to such a limited open forum, leaving school district board members, administrators, and principals vulnerable to potential litigation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor