

BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

January 10, 2018

To: The Assembly Committee on Local Government
From: Rep. Bob Kulp
Re: AB 729, relating to a revenue cap adjustment for workforce development improvements

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing this bill today and for allowing me to present it to you.

Assembly Bill 729 gives our schools an incentive to include more technical and vocational education in their curricula by creating a revenue cap exemption for equipment needed to carry out those lessons. What kind of equipment? The classic examples are a welder or CNC machine, but this could just as easily apply to machinery and auto repair, electronics, or even health care.

This idea came from the Speaker's Task Force on Youth Workforce Readiness that I chaired last session. As we held sessions around the state, it was a concern that was brought up several times, especially in the more rural school districts with tighter revenue caps. We heard again and again that a lack of funding was an issue in purchasing the equipment necessary to run a successful program.

Many of these school districts have an old milling machine or lathe, for example, the kind that was in my grandfather's machine shop. This is not the kind that is used in industry today, with CNC computer controls.

School districts in more populous areas of the state are blessed with many industries that have surplus equipment that is often donated to schools for tech ed classes. That is much less common in more sparsely populated areas of the state. But it's every bit as critical that the students in these areas get the education to get a head start in industry and are able to be positioned for the careers that await them in these industries.

In order to qualify for the exemption, the president of a local chamber of commerce – any chamber of commerce that serves any part of the school district's area – and the executive director of a regional workforce development board must agree to the expenditure before the district qualifies for the revenue cap exemption.

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

We included these provisions as safeguards both for the taxpayers and for the school districts, so everyone can be as comfortable as possible that the money is being spent on the right investments at the right time. It also serves as an incentive to have schools and industry working together much more closely. Too often in the past, industry, community, and our K-12 schools have been on different trains of thought. This bill helps to close that gap and makes collaboration happen.

I think you will hear from others who will give testimony as to how this would help train our youth to be anticipating getting into the workforce in their local communities, rather than going all the way through school without clear direction as to their career path.

School districts working together with industries in their communities to provide engaging, relevant training with modern equipment. I don't know of a better recipe to keep young people in areas of the state that have seen declines in population and school enrollments.

Thanks again for hearing this bill today. I urge your support of AB729.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: January 10, 2018

RE: Testimony on 2017 Assembly Bill 729

TO: The Assembly Committee on Local Government

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you to Chairman Brooks and the members of the committee for giving me this chance to present testimony on Assembly Bill 729 (AB 729). This bill is part of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative's Focus on Workforce, and has earned support from both sides of the aisle. AB 729 allows school districts to exceed revenue limits to pay for workforce development improvements such as the installation of work stations or machinery.

Over the last seven years, we in Wisconsin have gone from facing high unemployment to dealing with the challenge of a workforce shortage. This shortage is exacerbated in rural areas, including much of the area that I represent. Slower than average growth coupled with an increased need for workers has put a crunch on employers.

This bill acknowledges the need for meaningful partnerships between schools and businesses. Under this bill, a school district is only able to adopt a resolution to exceed revenue caps if the president of a local chamber of commerce and the executive director of a regional workforce development board jointly file a petition calling for a specific workforce development related improvement. This insistence on local cooperation ensures that any projects undertaken are necessary for the region and relevant for the students.

Please join me in supporting this tool for local school districts and businesses by voting in favor of AB 729.

ASSEMBLY BILL 729

Testimony—Patrick Rau, Superintendent; School District of Bonduel and President of the Wolf River School to Work Consortium

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I am representing students, families, and the communities of the Bonduel School District and Shawano County in an attempt to share why and how Assembly Bill 729 will provide the resources needed to develop a highly-skilled workforce.

Seven years ago we began our strategic plan for workforce development. It was 2010 and our community and school was at a crossroads, much like the state of Wisconsin. The unemployment rate was increasing and the number of our students living in poverty was growing faster. It was our goal to develop a graduates who were career ready, but it was our obligation to provide the same service to our community residents.

We developed a strategic plan to develop programming to satisfy our local workforce demands with skilled workers. We currently have programming in CNC Manufacturing, Electro-Mechanical Engineering, IT Help Desk, Practical Nursing, and MIG Welding. Future programming will include expansion of current programs along with Agriculture and Printmaking.

Why is our plan working? Because we didn't do it alone. We needed assistance to move the roadblocks of money, space, and geography. Working with the chamber of commerce, the county economic development group, our school to work consortium, NWTC, NEW Manufacturing Council, and most importantly with local industry we identified what our local and regional workforce needs are and the skills needed by that same workforce. I expect that is what you would like too as a result of the passage of this bill.

Will it help us allocate resources? Yes, recently six teaching positions and a principal position was reduced. So when faced with textbook needs, support staff, teaching positions, a new boiler..... or a CNC Lathe or Milling Machine, welding equipment, or network servers for our workforce development programming. We need to choose teachers, warmth, and teaching materials.

Does it bolster our economy? Yes, our students get jobs. Great jobs locally. We have graduates either on the job or in school for every program. And their good jobs because they have the skills. Feel free to call World Wide Signs and J & R Machining for references.

And lastly this is good for kids.

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to visit and learn how workforce development in rural schools is a great investment in our children and in rural Wisconsin.