



JAMES W. EDMING

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 635
Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
December 8, 2021

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 635. I would like to thank Senator Kooyenga for asking me to work with him on this important legislation.

Those who serve in the military and their families make great sacrifices for our state and nation. One of the challenges faced by service members and their families is being required to relocate to a new post. Unfortunately, if the spouse or parent of a student at one of our state's public technical colleges or universities is relocated outside of Wisconsin due to their military service, it may cause the student to lose their state residency status. This would result in the student being required to pay nonresident tuition even though the student was treated as a resident prior to the relocation.

AB 635 corrects this problem by allowing relocated service members, their spouses, and dependents to be considered residents which permits them to pay in-state tuition at UW System universities and Wisconsin Technical Colleges if they can demonstrate that they are bona fide residents during the relocation period. In addition, if dependents are able to make this demonstration they will continue to be considered residents of this state after the relocation period has ended. This will help in situations such as when a military parent retires from military service to another state outside of Wisconsin.

This bill is another way we can say thank you to service members and their families by making college more affordable for them. Also, by encouraging our service members and their families to attend college in Wisconsin, it increases the likelihood that they stay in our state and become part of our workforce after they complete their education.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of this legislation and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.



DALE KOOYENGA
STATE SENATOR · 5TH DISTRICT

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December 8, 2021

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

FR: Senator Dale Kooyenga

RE: Support for SB 605 – resident tuition at University of Wisconsin System institutions and technical colleges as applied to relocated service members and their children and spouses.

Thank you for holding a hearing on SB 605. This legislation allows relocated service members, their spouse and dependents to be considered residents of Wisconsin for the purposes of paying in-state tuition at a public university or technical college in Wisconsin.

If a student at a public university or technical college in Wisconsin has a parent who is relocated outside of Wisconsin in the course of their military service, the student loses state residency status and is forced to pay nonresident tuition regardless if the student was treated as a resident prior to the relocation.

Military members and their families provide a tremendous benefit to our state and often face unexpected hurdles as a result of their sacrifice to our country. Wisconsin should eliminate those hurdles by making college more affordable for military members and their families.

This bill corrects a problem brought to our attention by a student's unexpected out-of-state tuition bill. SB 605 allows military members, their spouse and dependents to be considered residents, allowing them to pay in-state tuition at UW System and WTCS schools. The applicant must demonstrate they are bona fide residents during the relocation period via tax return filings, voter or vehicle registrations, employment, physical residence, WI operator's license, self-support, involvement in community activities, or physical presence in the state for at least 12 months prior to start of semester. SB 605 does not allow resident tuition for a student who enters and remains in the state solely to obtain an education.

Senator Darling and I confirmed with UW-System this language gives universities flexibility, but does not mandate, allowing the institutions to determine bona fide residency. Passage of this bill would affirm Wisconsin's commitment to our military families and easing the burdens their service may cause.

This legislation has bipartisan support and will provide a significant relief to impediments that military families have encountered when a service member is relocated.

Thank you for hearing SB 605. I respectfully ask for your support.



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities

2021 Assembly Bill 635

Resident tuition at University of Wisconsin System institutions and technical colleges as applied to relocated service members and their children and spouses.

December 8, 2021

Chairman Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities:

The University of Wisconsin–Madison thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Assembly Bill 635, relating to resident tuition at University of Wisconsin System institutions and technical colleges as applied to relocated service members and their children and spouses. UW–Madison submits this testimony for information only.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison values the sacrifice of military families and the important contributions they make to this nation. University of Wisconsin institutions have a long and storied history of educating military members through the ROTC program and are proud to be home to many servicemembers and their families. We support the general objectives and intent of Assembly Bill 635 in providing relocated active-duty military family members resident tuition. This is consistent with existing nonresident tuition exemptions for servicemembers and their families who are stationed within 90 miles of Wisconsin.

UW–Madison supports a more comprehensive and holistic approach to residency for veterans and military-connected families with several updated provisions and exemptions, rather than making an additional adjustment, as this proposal does in its current form. A comprehensive strategy is needed in order to ensure that eligibility is clear to military-connected students and their families.

A comprehensive approach to addressing residency determination for this population should include a solution to address the constituent concern referenced by the bill authors. It should also address several other issues that make determining residency status unnecessarily more complex for residency officials at UW campuses. The current ad-hoc approach to residency status over the past few legislative cycles has put an undue administrative burden on students, their families, and UW System institutions by making them navigate a complex and ever-changing list of

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exemptions and rules that do not always cooperate with one another, rather than focusing on serving the student population that we hope to help. By adopting a more comprehensive review of residency statutes, UW System institutions could more efficiently determine residency for their student population, eliminating uncertainty for both students and campuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the impact this legislation would have on UW-Madison. If you have any questions, please reach out to UW-Madison Director of State Relations Crystal Potts at crystal.potts@wisc.edu or (608) 265-4105.



Office of Government Relations

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DATE: December 8, 2021

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

FROM: DeeJ Lundgren, UW System Interim Associate Vice President for Government Relations

RE: Written Testimony on Assembly Bill 635

Thank you, Chair Murphy and committee members, for providing UW System (UWS) an opportunity to submit testimony on Assembly Bill 635, regarding nonresident tuition for service members and their family.

UW System is dedicated to providing a welcoming campus environment for our active military members and their families. We recognize the unique experience military members and their families confront in the service of our country, and we wish to limit barriers they encounter. In that spirit UW campuses provide guidance on reenrollment options or full tuition and fee refunds when students are deployed under state or federal authority. Active duty personnel also have access to the range of services and dedicated lounge space provided to student veterans. We appreciate Representative Edming and Senator Kooyenga for bringing forth this legislation that will benefit active service members, and their families, who may be relocated out-of-state during their military service.

Although we support this effort, we believe that a more comprehensive update to the residence requirements outlined in §36.27 would serve to benefit military members and other individuals facing undue obstacles in determining residency. Wisconsin's residency statutes have become overly cumbersome over decades of additions and exemptions. The complexity has resulted in unnecessary burdens on students, families, and our institutions. UWS recognized the need to improve and simplify the residency statutes, and convened a workgroup to revise, simplify, and improve §36.27. The suggested changes provided by this workgroup would address the concerns AB 635 aims to improve.

We appreciate the work of the authors and of the committee for bringing forth this legislation. We recognize that the current statutes are a barrier to our military families and these barriers can and should be fixed. However, we hope to work with the authors to comprehensively improve the residency statutes to improve access and limit barriers for a broader scope of individuals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation.

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To Whom It May Concern:

I wish that I were able to be there in person on November 18th to convey my support for the UW Military Tuition Bill (SB 605), but I appreciate the opportunity to share my family's story with you, in order to explain why your vote in favor of this bill is so important to me.

Before I begin, I want to clarify one important fact. My family, due to both some fortunate and some unfortunate circumstances is extremely close. For some reasons you'll see below, when I reference my nephew, he is as close to me as might be your son.

My nephew, Jacob Riggs, would be junior in college, but is currently attending his sophomore year at UW Superior for reasons that this bill is intended to address. In summary, in 2020 there was no state in the United States for which Jacob would qualify as a resident for the purposes of in state tuition. It seemed absolutely insane to me, but I'll list the circumstances that ultimately led to an 18 year old young man choosing to drop out of college in order to prove that Wisconsin was his home. To be clear, this is not a case of a kid moving to WI trying to claim residency because he didn't want to pay out of state tuition. This is a case of a military child, whose family moved his senior year in high school, and he wanted to go HOME instead of following to their next state.

- Jacob Riggs was born and raised near Madison Wisconsin.
- Jacob's mom, my sister Theresa, and dad, Scott, were born and raised in Wisconsin. Both attended the University of Platteville. Theresa was a teacher, turned stay at home mom, turned Epic trainer for Dean Health Systems in Madison. Scott was a Madison Sheriff's Deputy and a reservist in the Air National Guard.
- Scott's military career,, like most others, was one of sacrifice on his family's part, but also one that allowed us to become the close family that we are. Jacob to experienced only 2 birthdays in his childhood with his father home, one being the year of his birthday. A few short months after one deployment Scott was diagnosed with stage 4b non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and given 2 weeks to live, as a result Jacob and his two brothers, Ian and Tristan lived with me every other weekend after treatments while Theresa kept their new born baby Rowan home while caring for Scott. If you ask Jacob what it was like for his dad to have cancer, he'd tell you it was awesome. He got to live with his aunt and his grandma and it was one of the best years of his life, because as a family, that's what we do, we make mountains out of valleys.
- In 2013, when Jacob was 12 years old, Scott's Military career took him to Ohio. Scott wanted to be full time military and there was not a position in WI. Scott and Theresa relocated their family of four children to Ohio to support Scott's career. The family hated OH, they were alone, far from family, and it never felt like home.
- In April of 2019, Jacob's senior year of high school, Scott took a new position in the military and relocated his family to Florida. Even though Scott's position was in Georgia, the family chose to move closer to Scott's sister, learning from their mistake in Ohio with no family near them, and Scott commutes 3 hours to work on the weekends.
- Jacob chose not to move with his family. As a senior in high school he made the decision that the military had taken enough from him and he wanted to go home. Jacob remained in OH with a family friend so that he could graduate high school. Feeling relatively homeless, Jacob had a decision to make, where to live now. Wisconsin was really the only "home" Jacob ever knew, so he decided to come home and live with me after high school.
- In May of 2019 Jacob applied to and was accepted to the University of Wisconsin-Superior. Jacob joined their soccer team and his freshman year was their goalkeeper.
- The next year was a complete mess of paperwork and qualifications trying to determine where Jacob was a resident. The University concluded that Jacob was not a resident of Wisconsin, so he paid out of state tuition for a year and just to ensure he could attend college, and fought to prove that he was making Wisconsin his home.
- In 2020, Jacob found himself as a resident of NO WHERE. Yes that's correct, not a single state he qualified for in state tuition. To add insult to injury, Jacob would have qualified for his father's GI benefits and attend any University in Wisconsin for free, if he were a resident of Wisconsin, but Jacob chose to stay pay for his first

year of school because he wanted to prove that he was serious about living here. So he was out one year of tuition and had no where he could attend now as a resident.

- Feeling trapped and helpless, at this point we reached out to Senator Dale Kooyenga for help. We had run into roadblock after roadblock, no one even giving us a path to follow or guidance on how to become a resident. We felt like no one was listening, doors were closing in our faces, and we were figuring it out on our own. Jacob was completely disheartened, ready to just give up on college all together and honestly, quite angry with the place he once called home. Thank God, Dale listened, he provided outlets to turn to, he fought for Jacob, he listened to Jacob, and he realized, there was a problem.
- Jacob made the difficult decision to drop out of college. I'm so proud of him because he worked his butt off that year, he stayed in WI, he rented his own home rather than staying with me to prove he was "committed" and he powered through. He is now once again attending UW Superior as a member of the men's soccer team, and he is officially recognized as a resident of Wisconsin.

I do not wish this circumstance on any child. I think it is hard enough for kids to devote themselves to college, so taking a year off and committing to living on your own and going back is something I consider extra ordinary. I'll be honest with you I spent 365 days praying Jacob didn't give up on the idea of going to school, and there was a time I thought he may have. He was depressed and angry, but as a family we worked through it, and he rose above the challenges. Jacob was simply a kid who's family was relocated because his dad chose to serve in the United States Military. Jacob was a kid who was born and raised in Wisconsin. Jacob was a kid who wanted to come HOME. But our laws didn't allow that to happen.

I am extremely grateful for Senator Kooyenga for listening to our family, hearing our voices, and understanding that this is a problem that all military children face. I am glad that he encouraged Jacob to stay **home**, not to give up on Wisconsin, to dig deep and drive through. I'm thankful that Dale committed to my nephew that he personally would become part of the solution. I ask you all to consider all the kids like my nephew Jacob who want to come home, and I ask for your support in passing this bill. I hope you all support US Military Tuition Bill (SB 605).

Thank you so much for your support, and I wish I could be there personally to tell you my story.

Jean-Marie