

Senate Committee on Education
April 21, 2021

Department of Public Instruction Testimony
in Support of Senate Bill 182

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) appreciates the opportunity to provide Chairwoman Darling and members of the committee this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 182 (SB 182), which would eliminate the prohibition on school starting prior to September 1.

Background

Public schools were prohibited from starting school prior to September 1 under 1999 Wisconsin Act 9. Three exceptions to this prohibition were built into the law and DPI was given authority to grant additional exceptions under special circumstances in administrative rule PI 27.

Exceptions in statute include:

- Holding athletic contests or practices.
- Scheduling in-service or work days.
- Holding school year-round.

A small number of schools hold school year-round. Most school districts schedule in-service days one to two weeks prior to school starting. The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) usually allows fall practices to begin early in August.

Exceptions in PI 27 include:

- Offering specialized programming for groups of students. (No authorization from DPI is required for this provision).
- Extraordinary reasons as approved by DPI including:
 - Major construction projects that cause the school term to be altered and necessitate an earlier start date for the entire district.
 - Closure of school due to forces of nature, code violations, or environmental orders.
 - Excessive costs associated with the transportation of pupils who attend private schools that start prior to September 1.
 - High schools with more than 75 percent of students in grades 11 and 12 enrolled in an international baccalaureate (IB) program.

The DPI has historically granted just a handful of early start exceptions due to the limits placed on the department in rule as noted in the table below.

School year	Total # requested	Total # Approved
2021-22	TBD	13
2020-21	19	18
2019-20	15	14
2018-19	6	5
2017-18	31	17

A complete list of school districts seeking waiver is included at the end of this testimony.

Analysis

SB 182 would remove the prohibition on starting school prior to September 1. While COVID-19 has resulted in an increase in requests to start school early due to learning disruptions, there have been multiple and varied instances over the years of school districts seeking to have flexibility to start early to meet the needs of their students and community. This bill would return to public schools the ability to set their calendars to meet those varied needs.

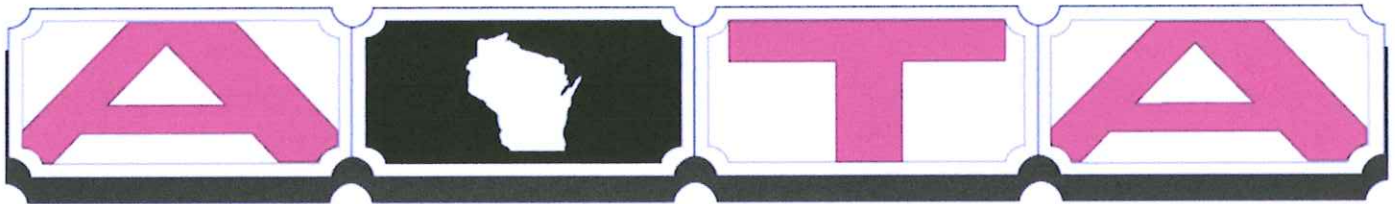
If there are questions about this testimony, please contact Grant Huber, Legislative Liaison, at grant.huber@dpi.wi.gov.

**School Districts Seeking Exemptions to September 1 Start Date
2017 - Present**

District/School	Approved / Not Approved / Withdrawn	School Year
Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan	Approved	2021-22
Durand-Arkansaw School District	Approved	2021-22
Royall School District	Approved	2021-22
Fall River School District	Approved	2021-22
Granton Area School District	Approved	2021-22
Brillion Public Schools	Approved	2021-22
Randolph School District	Approved	2021-22
Stanley-Boyd School District	Approved	2021-22
Cornell School District	Approved	2021-22
Melrose-Mindoro School District	Approved	2021-22
Columbus School District	Approved	2021-22
Clintonville School District	Approved	2021-22
Milwaukee (Rufus King, Ronald Reagan, Pulaski)	Approved	2021-22
Platteville School District	Approved	2020-21
Granton School District	Approved	2020-21
Rice Lake Area School District	Approved	2020-21
Cornell School District	Approved	2020-21
Bruce School District	Approved	2020-21
Brillion Public Schools	Approved	2020-21
School District of Webster	Approved	2020-21
School District of Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan	Approved	2020-21
School District of Greenwood	Approved	2020-21
Melrose-Mindoro School District	Approved	2020-21
Kickapoo Area School District	Approved	2020-21
Arbor Vitae-Woodruff Jt. 1 School District	Withdrawn	2020-21
Peshtigo School District	Approved	2020-21
Wausaukee School District	Approved	2020-21
Stanley-Boyd School District	Approved	2020-21
Crandon School District	Not Approved	2020-21
Mineral Point School District	Approved	2020-21
School District of Sevastopol	Approved	2020-21
Milwaukee (Rufus King, Ronald Reagan, Pulaski)	Approved	2020-21
Burlington Area School District	Approved	2020-21
School District of Manawa	Approved	2019-20
Siren School District	Approved	2019-20
North Cape School District	Approved	2019-20
Norway J7 (Drought School)	Approved	2019-20
Washington-Caldwell School District	Approved	2019-20

Waterford Union High School	Approved	2019-20
Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District	Approved	2019-20
Waterford Graded School District Joint No. 1	Approved	2019-20
Edgerton School District	Approved	2019-20
Mineral Point School District	Approved	2019-20
Pewaukee School District	Approved	2019-20
Greendale Schools	Approved	2019-20
Verona Area School District	Approved	2019-20
Milwaukee (Rufus King, Ronald Reagan, Pulaski)	Approved	2019-20
Kickapoo	Not Approved	2019-20
Brown Deer	Approved	2018-19
Niagara	Not Approved	2018-19
North Fond du Lac	Approved	2018-19
Milwaukee (Rufus King, Ronald Reagan, Pulaski)	Approved	2018-19
Menomonee Falls	Approved	2018-19
Mount Horeb	Approved	2018-19
Menominee Indian	Not Approved	2017-18
Thorp	Approved	2017-18
Grafton	Approved	2017-18
Shawano	Not Approved	2017-18
Wonewoc	Not Approved	2017-18
Iola-Scandinavia	Approved	2017-18
Rhineland	Not Approved	2017-18
Pecatonica	Not Approved	2017-18
Elewa-Strum	Approved	2017-18
New London	Not Approved	2017-18
Pewaukee	Not Approved	2017-18
Wautoma	Not Approved	2017-18
St. Francis	Not Approved	2017-18
Elmbrook	Not Approved	2017-18
Hurley	Not Approved	2017-18
Germantown	Approved	2017-18
Beecher-Dunbar-Pembine	Approved	2017-18
Goodman-Armstrong Creek	Approved	2017-18
Menomonee Falls	Approved	2017-18
Niagara	Approved	2017-18
Northland Pines	Not Approved	2017-18
Shorewood	Not Approved	2017-18
Ellsworth	Approved	2017-18
Florence County	Approved	2017-18
Lodi	Approved	2017-18
Clinton	Not Approved	2017-18
Mukwonago	Approved	2017-18

Hudson	Approved	2017-18
Melrose-Mindoro	Approved	2017-18
Muskego-Norway	Approved	2017-18
Dodgeville	Approved	2017-18
Milwaukee	Approved	2017-18



Association of Wisconsin Tourism Attractions

560 Wisconsin Dells Parkway Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965 (608) 254-2525 • FAX (608) 254-6103 E-mail: info@wiattraction.com www.wiattraction.com

APRIL 21, 2021

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education
From: Tom Diehl, President of AWTA
Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 182, School Start Legislation

The Association of Wisconsin Tourism Attractions is registering opposed to Senate Bill 182 as it would have a significant negative impact on Wisconsin's economy.

Tourism is a vital component of the Wisconsin economy. Visitors generated \$1.6 billion in state and local revenue in 2019 and tourism supports more than 202,000 jobs, saving Wisconsin taxpayers nearly \$687 per household.

A big part of that revenue is generated in the month of August, when our weather is warm, and our lakes are at their peak temperatures. Looking around the state at some of our most popular lakes, the temperature difference tells you one reason June tourism does not compare to August in Wisconsin. For example, Lake Geneva on June 1 registers an average surface water temp of 65 degrees, by August 1 that temperature is up to 82 degrees. Lake Winnebago also experiences the same dramatic increase from 63 degrees June 1 to 77 degrees on August 1.

AWTA has always stressed the importance of strong schools in Wisconsin, as we have a close working relationship with teachers and students who make up a large percentage of our workforce. We feel the September 1 school start date has proven to be successful for our students and teachers, families who enjoy vacationing in August and the Wisconsin economy.

One of the often-cited reasons for making this change is AP testing which occurs in May. We are proud of the fact the Wisconsin is currently 1 of 16 states that exceed the national average of graduates scoring 3 or higher on AP exams. In fact, if you look at data from 2003, (shortly after the September 1 school start date took effect in Wisconsin), to 2020, Wisconsin has witnessed a 14 percent increase in those scoring 3 or higher on AP exams. In 2020, Wisconsin was 11th best in the nation for students scoring 3 or higher on AP exams.

Along with the significant loss of revenue, changing this law would add to the already difficult staffing issues many of our attractions are facing. With Minnesota and Michigan starting school after Labor Day, many of their residents enjoy vacations in Wisconsin in August. This change would negatively impact the pool of potential employees and make it very difficult for our most popular attractions to operate at a high level in peak season.

Starting school after September 1 is clearly working in Wisconsin for both the schools and the tourism industry. We respectfully ask that you to vote no to SB 182.



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April 21, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Education
Senator Darling, Chair

FR: Susan Quam, Executive Vice President

RE: Written Testimony on SB 182

Thank you Madam Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Education for reading our testimony. Unfortunately we are not able to attend the hearing today.

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association (WRA) represents over 7,000 restaurant locations statewide. Our organization represents all segments of the restaurant and hospitality industry; our membership includes food establishments of all types and sizes, such as seasonal drive-ins, supper clubs, diners, locally owned franchisees, fine-dining and hotels/resorts. Over 75 percent of our membership are independent restaurants. Regardless of ownership type, all restaurants are the cornerstones of their neighborhoods and communities. Restaurants not only provide great food, drink and hospitality, they support schools, teams, charities and churches with fundraising and donations. They provide meeting places to celebrate, mourn and organize, or just provide a safe, tasty meal for a busy family.

I am sure you all know the toll the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on the entire hospitality and tourism industry. The vast majority of restaurants have seen steep declines in their sales, price increases in supplies and services and in some places, severe restrictions on their ability to be open and safely serve customers. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and restaurateurs are now hopeful for a busy tourism season. **No matter how busy our members get this summer, it will not make up for the losses and debt incurred in 2020.**

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association opposes SB 182's proposal to remove the current requirement that schools wait until September 1 to commence their school year. If passed, the policy will have a negative impact on Wisconsin's tourism economy, already reeling from the devastating effects of the pandemic.

Removing the September 1 school start date would clearly lead to less revenue for Wisconsin businesses and less tax revenue for Wisconsin state government during the peak summer vacation months, which will already be in decline due to event cancellations and other negative effects of the pandemic. Minnesota and Michigan, two major competitors to Wisconsin tourism, have state laws requiring schools to start after Labor Day. Further, repealing Wisconsin's law could put the state's tourism industry at a competitive disadvantage, as there would be fewer employees available to serve our visitors.

A 2016 survey conducted by St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute found that 68 percent of Wisconsin parents support the September 1 school start date law, many stating a preference for a post-Labor Day start; and that summers in Wisconsin are already short enough. August also has warmer temperatures than June, which is perfect for family vacations, but can create uncomfortable learning environments in schools not equipped with air conditioning.

The WRA does not oppose efforts to help kids “catch up” on lost learning opportunities due to the pandemic. However, **local school boards and districts have great flexibility in setting their school calendar – they are in control of every day, and every hour of the school day, other than the earliest day school can start.** There are many ways for school districts to schedule their calendar to allow students “catch up” opportunities throughout the year, including going later into June. Advancement Placement (AP) course work can begin voluntarily over the summer by students interested in these courses. Since the September 1 school start date took effect, AP course participation and scores have increased significantly and are well above the national average.

School sports has also been brought up as a reason to start school earlier in August. Please remember that not every family has high school students in fall sports. Making every child in elementary, middle and high school return early for the convenience of a few students does make sense.

By eliminating the September 1 school start date, Wisconsin’s economy will lose millions of dollars, hundreds of jobs, and families will lose well deserved vacations when weather is at its best, and when they are growing more comfortable traveling again.

Thank you for your consideration.



Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator · District 8

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Education

Senate Bill 182: School Start Date

April 21, 2021

Thank you committee members for hearing testimony today on Senate Bill 182.

Under current law, public schools cannot begin fall classes before September 1st unless granted a waiver by the Department of Public Instruction. Senate Bill 182 empowers local school boards to decide if an earlier start date is in the best interest of their students. This bill would not require districts to begin school before September 1st, nor will it affect the number of days schools are required to be in session.

There are compelling academic reasons for allowing school districts the authority to set an earlier date for the start of fall classes. Many students take Advanced Placement (AP) courses throughout their academic year. Advanced Placement Exams, usually conducted in the first half of May, determine if students will receive AP credit toward college. Since the College Board sets the Advanced Placement Exams, local school districts are unable to alter the administration of these tests. Once these tests conclude, many students remain in AP classes for several weeks which could have been better spent preparing for these tests beforehand.

Additionally, many students who participate in fall sports or other elective courses are already on campus in August. In many instances, schools schedule their first football game or another fall athletic competition before classes are in session.

Due to the September 1st mandate, public schools cannot begin summer vacation until the second or third week of June. Many summer academic enrichment programs and mentoring opportunities have already started by this time, meaning public school students miss the beginning of these programs.

It is an understatement to say this school year has been anything short of extraordinary. The COVID-19 pandemic has put new strains on learning. Senate Bill 182 will give school districts another tool to minimize the amount of learning loss that has occurred. This act will first apply to the commencement of the 2022-23 school term.

Thank you again committee members for hearing Senate Bill 182. I hope to have your support.



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JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: April 21, 2021
RE: SUPPORT for SENATE BILL 182, relating to the commencement of fall classes in public schools

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's locally elected public school boards.

The WASB strongly **supports** Senate Bill 182, which would eliminate the prohibition against public schools starting fall classes before September 1, beginning with the 2022-23 school term.

The setting of the school calendar is an important matter of educational policy which has ramifications on curriculum and student programs, student success and absenteeism.

The so-called "Sept. 1 start date mandate" was enacted as part of the 1999-2001 biennial budget (1999 Wisconsin Act 9) without a public hearing and without due consideration of its effect on students' educational interests, student achievement or student learning. Not surprisingly, the prohibition on starting fall classes prior to Sept. 1 has not improved academic programming or enhanced educational opportunities.

This prohibition is not evenly enforced on all K-12 schools and students. Wisconsin private schools and their students are not subject to this prohibition even when they receive substantial amounts of state funding through state voucher programs. Thus, private voucher schools that receive taxpayer dollars retain complete flexibility to start their school term prior to Sept. 1. Many Wisconsin private and parochial schools commence their school terms in mid-August, in some cases up to three weeks before Sept. 1.

The prohibition on starting public school classes prior to Sept. 1 has a number of negative effects on public school students and public school districts.

The prohibition places Wisconsin public school students at a disadvantage when they take national and international tests alongside other students, including Wisconsin private school students, who are not subject to a Sept. 1 start date. The students against whom Wisconsin public school students are competing often receive several weeks of additional instruction and preparation for high stakes exams such as the ACT and Advanced Placement exams. Allowing local control over the start date could level the playing field for these students.

The Sept. 1 school start date mandate has resulted in school terms ending in mid- to late-June, creating problems for students, families, teachers, and school officials and placing public high school students seeking summer employment at a competitive disadvantage in comparison to college students whose school year often ends in mid-May.

Because, generally speaking, Wisconsin public schools are required to transport private school as well as public school students who qualify for such transport, many public school districts must begin run busses and bus routes for private school students for 2-3 weeks before the school term begins for public schools.

According to current law ([s. 118.045, Stats.](#)), a school board may commence its school term prior to Sept. 1 only for “extraordinary reasons” and only if it submits a written request to the Department of Public Instruction detailing those “extraordinary reasons.”

A pandemic resulting in serious and substantial learning disruption certainly seems to qualify as such an “extraordinary” circumstance. In fact, a compelling argument could be made for the bill before you to take effect beginning with the 2021-22 school year.

With student learning disrupted by school closures in the spring of 2020 caused by the pandemic, getting students back into schools as early as possible in fall 2021 could be an important tool for helping students advance their learning to the level it would have been had the pandemic not disrupted learning. Assuming the length of the school year would remain roughly the same, an earlier start to the 2021-22 school year would allow more time for summer school and credit recovery programs the following summer.

Students will likely be more eager to be engaged and get off to a stronger start in late August than they are in early June, when it can be hard to keep students engaged. In addition, allowing schools to commence fall classes prior to Sept. 1 would permit schools to hold classes outdoors and open windows to allow for better ventilation of classrooms. This is an important consideration given that current vaccines are not approved for use in children under the age of 16 and it is unclear that all school children will be fully vaccinated by Sept. 1.

Local control over the school start date will also allow school boards to better align the school calendar with co-curricular activities for high school students, including fall sports like football that begin practices in early August and begin games before Sept. 1.

Current law has largely subordinated all of these concerns to the desires of Wisconsin’s tourism and hospitality industries for young workers and for young customers and the money they and their families might spend in the waning days of summer.

We fully recognize that the current pandemic has been a challenging time for tourism and hospitality-oriented businesses, and we earnestly wish them a quick recovery aided by vaccines and a robust travel and tourism season this year. We would certainly hope that the tourism and hospitality industry will have recovered sufficiently by next year to accommodate this bill, which would make a long-sought change, beginning with the 2022-23 school year.

The state of Wisconsin has given local school boards control over a great many things; however, for 21 years, it has deprived school boards of local control in determining the school calendar that best serves their students and their local communities. It is time to consider making a change.

We encourage you to **support** Senate Bill 182.



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April 21, 2021

Memo To: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Senator Alberta Darling, Chair

From: Kathi Kilgore
Contract Lobbyist

RE: Opposition to Senate Bill 182 / School Start Date

On behalf of over 500 lodging properties from across Wisconsin, representing small family businesses, franchised properties and independent properties of all sizes in our state, we respectfully ask that you oppose Senate Bill 182, which would repeal the September 1st K-12 public school start date requirement for all school districts starting with the 2022-2023 school year.

Education is clearly very important to everyone in this state. We all want to be sure that our kids have the best education possible, and as business owners and managers, our members want to have an educated workforce. The truth is that this bill, while the intentions are good, will not fix the problems facing our educational system today, and it will have a negative impact on the lodging industry and all other industries that make up Wisconsin's tourism industry.

Recent data released by the College Board, the organization that develops and administers Advanced Placement (AP) courses, shows that 26% of Wisconsin's class of 2020 scored a 3 or higher on their AP exams, which means our state is number 11 overall in the US and well above the national average. Additionally, over the past 10 years, Wisconsin has seen an 8.1% increase in students scoring a 3 or higher. Apparently, Wisconsin students are already testing very well in AP exams, which brings into question why repealing the current school start date requirement is truly needed.

Starting school before September 1st shortens the Wisconsin summer for vacations and travel by families with school age children, which negatively impacts the already short tourism season. Tourism and lodging businesses - from small family businesses up to larger resorts - depend on the revenue generated in a full summer. Additionally, the tourism industry relies on the student workforce to help our properties operate during the busiest time of the year. Many students rely on this income as they save to go to college and advance their careers.

Popular opinion also plays a role in this. A 2016 state-wide study by St. Norbert College's Strategic Research Institute found that almost 70 percent of parents want the post-September 1 school start date. More than half of those in support stated they STRONGLY support this, while only 8% of those opposing said they strongly oppose.

It's also important to point out that local school boards have full authority and control over the other components of the school schedule, which empowers them to easily end school by early June, without eliminating holiday breaks, weather days, staff development days, teachers' conference days, and early release days. Legislation passed not too long ago eliminated the 180 day requirement, enabling even more schedule flexibility.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wisconsin's lodging industry alone generated over \$90 million annually in state sales tax revenue, which is general purpose revenue (GPR), that helps fund many important state-funded purposes agencies, programs and purposes. Therefore, the more successful our industry and the tourism industry as a whole is each year, the more GPR generated to fund a host of critical purposes, including public education.

We respectfully ask that the members of this committee oppose SB 182. The current law, that has been in place for two decades, allows DPI to grant a school district a waiver if the district can demonstrate and document sufficient need, and that provision is more than adequate to address any unusual circumstances as they come up.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and thank you for your consideration.



**Statement Before the
Senate Committee on Education**

By

**Bill G. Smith
State Director
National Federation of Independent Business
Wisconsin**

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Senate Bill 182

Madam Chair, members of the Committee, my name is Bill G. Smith, State Director in Wisconsin for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB).

The NFIB, founded over 75 years ago, is the state's largest small business advocacy organization representing nearly 10,000 small and independent businesses located throughout our state.

While NFIB's membership includes a diverse range of business types – from retail to service to manufacturing to construction – if there is one sector of our state's economy dominated by small businesses it would be tourism-related businesses.

Therefore, tourism is vitally important to small business – a strong tourism season drives the economies of many rural communities, providing thousands of jobs, and generating billions of dollars in state and local taxes, according to the Department of Tourism.

The impact of tourism-related spending can be found in every corner of our state. It provides a critically important economic boost to a small business community in desperate need as it struggles toward recovery from 2020.

Senate Bill 182, which would allow public schools to start fall classes before September 1, would eliminate job opportunities, reduce tax revenue, and undermine the recovery of an industry struggling to make a comeback in 2021.

**National Federation of Independent Business in Wisconsin
10 East Doty Street, Suite 519 – Madison, WI 53703 - 608/255-6083 – www.nfib.com/wi**

Statement Before the Senate Committee on Education
Wednesday, April 21, 2021
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According to a recent survey by the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, a majority of business owners dependent on tourism, expect this year to be a somewhat or much better year than 2020.

NFIB's Economic Trends Report said a lot of Main Street is still not fully operational, amusements, restaurants, gyms, and specialty shops, all depend on foot traffic, often generated by a healthy tourism industry, and there is still significant policy uncertainty for COVID-19, tax policy and the focus of regulations from regulatory agencies.

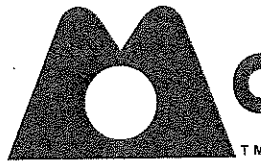
Madam Chair, members of the Committee, these are tough times for small businesses, including those that rely on tourists. Reducing the tourism season as a result of schools starting in August, eliminates the ability of small businesses to have a full summer season, and this could be a difference between these family-owned businesses earning a profit or experiencing continued economic hardships.

In conclusion, the September 1st date allows Wisconsin to promote a longer tourism season, which generates revenue, extends the season for earnings, and keeps revenue flowing to tourism-related businesses.

Therefore, the small business community strongly supports current law which prohibits, with some exception, public schools from starting the fall term before September 1st, and I respectfully urge members of the Committee to oppose recommending Senate Bill 182 for passage.

Thank you.

April 21, 2021



CAVE OF THE MOUNDS®
National Natural Landmark

Honored Senate Education Committee Members and Chair Darling, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Joe Klimczak and I have been the general manager of Cave of the Mounds for the past 22 years. I am here today to register my opposition to LRB1826/1 - the proposed school start date legislation.

I believe that the effect of this bill will be shorten the summer season, negatively affect tourism businesses and destroy tourism jobs. This, at just the time that these same tourism businesses and workers are struggling more than any time in memory.

In these past couple decades at Cave of the Mounds, I've experienced a number of setbacks in business due to external factors. First there was the recession following the attacks of September eleventh 2001. Some years later there was the great recession and a downturn that lasted years. But for tourism and hospitality businesses in particular this past year has been devastating far beyond something we've experienced before. Many businesses are gone forever, and others are struggling to hold on. Tourism is a difficult business in part because we rely on attracting visitors during the short summer season. This is especially true here in Wisconsin where our precious summers are all too brief. The effect of this bill would be to cut two of the most important weeks of our summer season. Cutting a large portion of our season, especially now when we are struggling most, will undoubtedly lead to business reductions and a loss of jobs and lower tax revenues. And, parents agree. In survey after survey, parents prefer a post September first start date by a two to one margin.

Meanwhile, schools are using advancements in technology to reinvent themselves. On-line and virtual schooling will continue after the pandemic and students will have more paths for learning than ever. Plus, the current law already provides for a great deal of local control over most aspects of the school schedule. So, exiting the pandemic, schools will be enjoying more flexibility than ever. The argument that an earlier school start date is needed for advanced placement students is not supported by fact. Interested students are able to voluntarily begin that coursework during the summer. In fact, since the September 1st school state date was enacted nearly twenty years ago, Wisconsin AP participation and scores have increased significantly and are well ahead of the national average.

Again, I urge you not to support LRB1826/1. The Wisconsin economy would lose millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs, and families would lose two precious weeks of their summer break just when the weather is at it's best.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Joe Klimczak
General Manager
Cave of the Mounds - National Natural Landmark



To: Members, Senate Committee on Education
From: Pam Seidl, Vice-Chair
Date: April 21, 2021
Re: Testimony in opposition of SB182 regarding the School Commencement Date

Chair and committee members: Destinations Wisconsin is comprised of 40 destination marketing organizations that promote destinations throughout our state. We oppose any attempt to change current law including SB182.

The September 1 school start date is beneficial to Wisconsin's economy and families, and there is no adverse impact on the education of our students. If passed, the policy will have a negative impact on Wisconsin's tourism economy, which is already reeling from the devastating effects of the pandemic. U.S. Travel estimates that Wisconsin's tourism economy lost \$5.6 billion dollars in 2020 due the pandemic. Industry experts indicate it may be 2024 before our industry fully recovers. Rescinding the September 1 school start date will only serve to hamper our industry's recovery.

Less State Revenue & Less Jobs

Removing the September 1 school start date would lead to less revenue for Wisconsin businesses and less tax revenue for Wisconsin state government during the peak summer vacation months. Minnesota and Michigan, two major competitors to Wisconsin tourism, have state laws requiring schools to start after Labor Day. Further, repealing Wisconsin's law could put the state's tourism industry at a competitive disadvantage as there would be fewer employees available to serve our visitors through August.

Parents Support September 1 Start

A survey conducted by St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute found that 68 percent of Wisconsin parents support the September 1 school start date law, many commenting a preference for a post-Labor Day start; and that summers in Wisconsin are already short enough. August also has warmer temperatures than June, which is perfect for family vacations, but can create uncomfortable learning environments in schools not equipped with air conditioning.

No Data to Support Change

Local school boards and districts have great flexibility in setting their school calendar, including selecting holiday breaks, setting staff development days, and determining school hours. Recent advancements in technology and virtual schooling make this flexibility even greater. Student achievement is not hampered by the September 1 school start date. In fact, since the September 1 school start date took effect, AP course participation and scores have increased significantly and are well above the national average. According to a Department of Public Instruction news release dated February 24, 2021, Wisconsin Students in the class of 2020 outperformed national averages on Advancement Placement (AP) tests.

Thank you for your consideration of our position on this matter.

Honorable Senator Darling-

I am writing today in regards to the public hearing on Senate Bill 182. I am the District Administrator for the School District of Arcadia located in west-central, rural Wisconsin. We are a school district of about 1300 students in grade PK-12 with a very diverse demographic with over 70% of our students identifying as Hispanic and over 70% of our student population receiving free or reduced lunch. We also are proud of the fact that many of our students participate in extra-curricular activities and are involved beyond their academics.

I am writing today in support of school districts having local control over the start date for their local schools. I firmly believe that this should be a local decision that can best be determined by the school board, administration, staff, families, and community. Locally, schools all deal with different situations that might call for different districts to start at different times. While I fully understand that some areas rely heavily on some of their young people working in the tourism industry, others do not. Regardless of the circumstances, each local school board understands what its community needs and should be afforded the opportunity to make that decision based on local control.

Further, I understand the argument that if kids are back in school families are less likely to travel to those tourism destinations. However, with many of our high school sports, and in some cases, middle school sports starting in early to mid-August, many of the students are already participating and competing in activities that do not allow them to travel anyway. If kids are already involved in school activities, I firmly believe that it should be up to the local community to make the final decision about the start date of school also.

As you recall, this was the system that was in place for several years, until the current law was put in place. It worked then, and it can work now. Please consider allowing local control to prevail, like is the tradition of government in the great state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin has always taken pride in being a local control state. Please add local control of the school start date to be a part of that proud tradition and history.

Respectfully,

Lance Bagstad
District Administrator

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#ArcadiaStrongTogether

Honorable Senator Darling-

I am writing today in regards to the public hearing on Senate Bill 182. I am the Superintendent for the School District of Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan, a rural school district found in western Wisconsin. We are a school district of about 550 students in grade PK-12 with a diverse demographic in which nearly 60% of our students receive free or reduced lunch and approximately 15% of our population is made up of Hispanic students.

I am writing today in support of school districts being given local control over the start date for their local districts. If there is one thing that we have learned from this pandemic, it is the need for local control. Over the past year districts have had to make very difficult decisions on how to deal with the impact of this pandemic. Districts were given local control to make decisions that were based on what was best for each particular school district. I firmly believe that the development of the school calendar should be a local decision that is best determined by the school board, administration, staff, families, and community. Every district has their own story to tell, their own reasons as to why a particular school year start time works for them. There are parts of our great state that do rely heavily on school aged individuals working in the tourism industry, but there are certainly others that do not. I don't believe that it is appropriate for one segment of the state to control the school calendar start date for the entire state.

I understand the fear is such that if districts started their school year earlier, it could negatively impact the tourism industry. The fact of the matter is that most districts have extracurricular activities starting in early to mid-August. In our rural communities, the bulk of families are taking their family vacations in late May through July, knowing that those activities are starting in August. Once again, each school district knows what is best for their students, staff, families, and communities, I feel it is only wise to allow administration and school boards to make those decisions at the local level.

I would ask that you please consider allowing local control be given to each school district. While this pandemic has caused a severe disruption in our schools, we have learned so much regarding what is best for our students, staff, families, and communities. Please trust to make similar decisions as to what is best for our school district by giving us local control when it comes to our school calendar.

Respectfully,

--

Paul Fischer
Superintendent
School District of Alma Center-Humbird-Merrillan
"It's A Great Day To Be A Hornet"