



JESSIE RODRIGUEZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 21ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 797: Establishing a Full Day 4K Pilot Program
Testimony of State Representative Jessie Rodriguez
Assembly Committee on Children and Families
February 20, 2018

Chairman Kitchens and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 797, legislation that will create a pilot program to allow for the expansion of full-day 4K programs in certain areas of the state.

Wisconsin has always been a leader in education innovation and was one of the first to establish a robust half-day 4K program for children throughout the state. The program has demonstrated tremendous success and continues to expand with hundreds of districts offering a 4K program. While many states have some form of 4K education, Wisconsin is one of only eight states with more than 50 percent enrollment.

Research has shown over time that children who participate in 4K are more likely to excel in a variety of academic areas compared to peers who did not participate in a 4K program. Data also suggests, children enrolled in a 4K program are more likely to graduate, enroll in higher education programs after high school and maintain financial stability later in life. Participation in a 4K program is especially important in preparing children for school who come from more challenging backgrounds and areas of the state that see higher rates of unemployment.

As we continue to explore new educational initiatives that improve student success, expanding to a full-day of 4K will provide a significant benefit to children throughout Wisconsin, especially those from areas facing economic challenges.

This legislation will allow the Department of Children and Families to provide grant funding for the creation of a pilot program that will allow existing half-day



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4K programs to expand to full-day. The bill requires the Secretary to identify no more than three counties with municipalities with high annual rates of unemployment for participation in the program.

School districts such as Racine Unified are already seeing tremendous results in children that participate in full-day 4K. The differences between students participating in full-day compared to half-day are significant. According to the district, in some instances, students participating in full-day 4K were twice as likely to meet development benchmarks compared to their half-day counterparts.

The benefits of expanding early childhood education programs like full-day 4K, cannot be overstated. School districts like Racine Unified are witnessing firsthand the success of full-day 4K. It is time to share this success with other areas of the state. I encourage your support for this legislation. Thank you for your time.



Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Children and Families,

Thank you for scheduling this public hearing on Assembly Bill 797. I know that moving this legislation forward would have a positive impact on students in up to three high unemployment communities who will receive funding for full-day 4-year old kindergarten (4K). I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Jeff Neubauer and I am the Executive Director of Higher Expectations for Racine County, an organization that was initiated by the Racine County Workforce Development Board to focus on improving education and employment outcomes for students and families in Racine County in order to address the difficult issues of employers struggling to fill positions while Racine's unemployment remains extremely high. Higher Expectations is convened by an array of employers and public entities to ensure that our community's institutions understand their data and what's working for our students and invest in best practices in order to improve outcomes.

The members of our Leadership Table, who are supporting this bill, and who have greatly supported our advocacy in expanding access to high-quality early childcare include: Dr. Bryan Albrecht, President, Gateway Technical College; John Batten, Chairman and CEO, Twin Disc, Tom Burke, President & CEO, Modine Manufacturing Company; County Executive Jonathan Delagrave, Dr. Deborah Ford, Chancellor, UW-Parkside; Jackie Hallberg, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries SE Wisconsin; Dr. Lolli Haws, Superintendent, RUSD; Art Howell, Chief of Police, City of Racine; Ann Lee, Sr. Vice President of Strategic Performance, Johnson Bank; Mayor Cory Mason; Matt Montemurro, President, RAMAC; Rodney Prunty, President and CEO, United Way of Racine County; Dr. Daniel Ross, Vice President, Ascension All-Saints; Chris Ruud, President, DeltaHawk Engines and the Ruud Family Foundation; Chad Severson, President, InSinkErator; Dr. John Swallow, President, Carthage College, and Jim Walker, Vice President, CNH Industries. These leaders are deeply invested in ensuring that our students are ready to enter the workforce when they complete their K-12 and post-secondary education and understand the impact of entering kindergarten ready to learn on the long-term potential of young children.

As you know, Assembly Bill 797 creates a pilot program that would use unspent funds from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to expand full-day four year old kindergarten in (up to three) counties that have a high level of unemployment and of economically disadvantaged students. The idea for this proposal originates from a partnership between Higher Expectations, Racine County, and a local, high-quality, private 4K provider here in Racine. This organization, AIM Now was providing half-day 4K (in partnership with RUSD) with a DPI-accredited teacher to economically disadvantaged families. With help from Racine County and RUSD, AIM Now was able to allocate funding for the rest of the school day.

Seeking to make this high-impact strategy more accessible, the County Executive's Office and Higher Expectations brought this idea to DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson, envisioning a different model of funding for the pilot. At the secretary's suggestion, we moved forward with a funding mechanism that would use unspent DCF funds to expand full-day 4K. The current proposal would use any identified unspent GPR funds or unspent TANF dollars within DCF, at the Secretary's discretion, to fund the creation of a grant program that is accessible to

organizations in any community in Wisconsin that has a high level of unemployment and economically disadvantaged families. Funding can be sought by any organization that provides half-day 4K and employs a DPI-certified teacher. Organizations include, but aren't limited to; public school districts, day care providers, and churches. In order to ultimately provide this funding for up to three organizations, DCF must identify available funds, and any funding decision is subject to passive review by the Joint Finance Committee, ensuring that there is accountability in the use of these funds.

When Higher Expectations launched about four years ago with the vision of a fully capable and employed Racine County Workforce, we knew that we had to start with early childhood if we wanted to truly enable students to live up to their full potential and be prepared for a career. National research has shown that investments in early childhood education lead to significant cost savings as a student proceeds through their K-12 and post-secondary educations, and into adulthood. In fact, according to research by James Heckman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist at the University of Chicago, we get over \$6 back for every dollar we invest in high-quality early childhood programming. Further, within RUSD, we can infer a correlation between Kindergarten Readiness and High School Graduation. We've looked at the data, and about three quarters of students enter Kindergarten with the literacy skills they need to learn successfully. And at the same time, about three quarters of our students currently graduate from high school on time. It can be inferred from this, that children who are prepared from Kindergarten are more successful throughout their K-12 experience, and less likely to fall back as they move up through the grades, so that they are able to graduate and successfully move forward into post-secondary education or a career.

It is crucial that we invest in early childhood education. To that end, Higher Expectations has partnered closely with the Early Learning Department at Racine Unified Schools to modestly expand access to full-day four year old kindergarten (4K). National research and experience in other states such as Utah clearly demonstrates that providing high-quality full-day 4K has been shown to improve educational and behavioral outcomes for students, and to reduce referrals into special education, dramatically lowering costs. As you will hear from Amy Shepherd, Interim Director of Early Learning at RUSD, students who have participated in their full-day classrooms have finished the 4K school year significantly more prepared to enter kindergarten, with at least one full-day class moving 100% of students to meet their developmental benchmarks. Whereas, about half of a similar group of students in half-day 4K met those same benchmarks. Particularly considering that many of the students participating in full-day classrooms are low-income students, gains like this are extremely significant.

It has also been central to our work to be innovative and data-driven when we seek to grow programs. We believe that Assembly Bill 797 will allow us to track results and measure the impact. Ultimately, this could move the needle on kindergarten readiness throughout Wisconsin. It is creative in its funding stream, using unspent funds from DCF only in the case that they are available. If we are fortunate enough to receive some of this funding in Racine, we have the designated resources and capability to closely track its effectiveness, working with participating 4K providers to measure their student data over time as compared to students in half-day classrooms, and to truly measure the impact of this pilot program.

Again, I thank you for your time and for hearing my testimony on Assembly Bill 797 and at this time, I am glad to take any questions that you may have.

TO: Chairman Joel Kitchens and Committee on Children & Families
FROM: Achieve Brown County Partnership
DATE: February 20, 2018
RE: SENATE BILL 663 / ASSEMBLY BILL 797, FULL DAY 4K PILOT PROGRAM IN HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AREAS

As business and education leaders in Brown County who are deeply engaged in supporting the cradle-to-career work of Achieve Brown County, we are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797 to pilot and test the benefits of funding full-day four-year-old kindergarten (4K) programs at the Department of Children and Families.

Our partners at Higher Expectations in Racine County have noted that a combination of national research, local data, and recommendations from the Speaker's Urban Education Task Force suggest that the use of funds within DCF to support full day 4K would build a stronger path to academic success for students in districts with high unemployment.

Achieve Brown County (ABC) was established by a cross-section of community partners with a vision of having all children succeed. We have learned that school success starts well before students arrive at the classroom. In Brown County, too many children lack access to high-quality early childhood education and care. Providing full-day 4K to every child is a critical step that moves us closer to ensuring that all children are prepared to succeed in school and life.

In Brown County, this initiative would enable ABC and communities across the state to collect and analyze data gathered from any grant awarded under this pilot to ensure data-driven and results-focused measurement to document its success. Upon proving the pilot program works, our hope would be that full-day 4K will become a legislative priority.

We strongly urge your support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797. In doing so, you will be taking a small but critical step towards providing opportunity and success for some of Wisconsin's most under resourced children.

Sincerely,

Achieve Brown County Executive Committee Members

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Mark Kaiser

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Lindquist Machine Corporation
Mark Kaiser/President/CEO

Tom Hedq

Foth Production Solutions, LLC
Tom Hedq/Business Unit Leader

Tim Weyenberg

X

Foth Companies
Tim Weyenberg/Former CEO

Robyn Davis, J.D.

X

Brown County United Way
Robyn Davis, J.D./President/CEO



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Children and Families
FROM: Milwaukee Succeeds Partnership
DATE: February 20, 2018
RE: Assembly Bill 797, Full Day 4k Pilot Program in High Unemployment Areas

We are writing today as business, education, and community leaders in the City of Milwaukee to express our support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797 to create a pilot program at the Department of Children and Families to help fund full-day four year old kindergarten (4K) programs in areas of high unemployment.

As noted by our partners at Higher Expectations in Racine County, a combination of national research, local data, and recommendations from the Speaker's Urban Education Task Force suggest that the use of funds within DCF to support full day 4K would build a path to academic success for students in districts with high unemployment including the City of Milwaukee.

Milwaukee Succeeds was established by a cross-sector of partners with a vision of "success for every child, in every school, cradle to career." We have learned that school success starts well before five-year-olds arrive at the classroom door. In the City of Milwaukee too many children lack access to high-quality early childhood education and care. At the same time, our partnership's interventions in literacy suggest that we cannot wait until children enter the traditional K-12 system to introduce early literacy skills, which are essential building blocks for long-term academic and workforce success. Providing full-day 4K to every child is a critical step that moves us closer to ensuring that all children are prepared to succeed.

In addition to improving outcomes for students and families, full day 4K would save money in a variety of ways including lowering special education costs. This initiative will enable communities across the state to collect and analyze data gathered from any grant awarded under this pilot to ensure data-driven and results- focused measurement to document its success. Upon proving the pilot program works, we hope that full day 4K will become a legislative priority.

This bill is cost neutral. It simply gives DCF the ability use eligible, unspent funds within the department to fund a pilot program. Should no such funds become available, the pilot program will not be funded.

We are strongly urge your support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797, a very small step towards opportunity and success for, particularly, some of Wisconsin's most disadvantaged children.

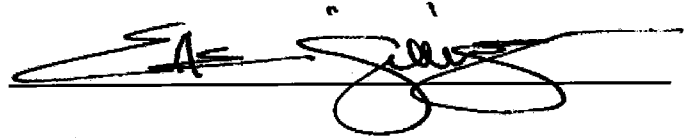
Sincerely,

Milwaukee Succeeds Executive Committee

- OVER -

Milwaukee Succeeds Executive Committee Members

Greater Milwaukee Foundation
President/Ellen Gilligan



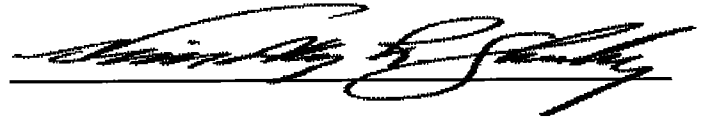
Common Council
President & Alderman/Ashanti Hamilton



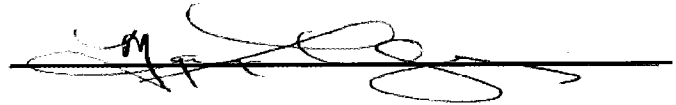
Greater Milwaukee Committee
Co-Chair/Mark Sabljak



Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
President/Tim Sheehy



United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County
President/Mary Lou Young





TO: MEMBERS, ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
FROM: HIGHER EXPECTATIONS FOR RACINE COUNTY
DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2018
RE: ASSEMBLY BILL 797
FULL DAY 4K PILOT PROGRAM IN HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AREAS

We are writing today as business, education, and community leaders in Racine County to express our support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797 to create a pilot program at the Department of Children and Families to help fund full-day four year old kindergarten programs in areas of high unemployment.

As members of Higher Expectations for Racine County's Leadership Table, we are committed to advancing efforts, such as full-day 4K, that will ensure our future workforce is prepared to succeed in school and career.

With the combination of national research, local data, and recommendations from the Speaker's Urban Education Task Force, the use of funds within DCF to support full day 4K would build a path to literacy success for students in districts with high unemployment, like Racine County. In addition to improving outcomes for students and families, full day 4K would save money in a variety of ways including lowering special education costs. Racine County, and hopefully others who seek to take advantage of this initiative, is poised to collect and analyze data gathered from any grant awarded under this pilot to ensure data-driven and results-focused measurement to document its success. Upon proving the pilot program works, we hope that full day 4K will become a legislative priority.

High quality full-day 4K may be the most effective way to prepare children, particularly those from more difficult backgrounds, for school and beyond. We are absolutely certain that full-day 4K will ensure far greater kindergarten readiness early childhood development, which is proven to reflect academic success and workforce readiness in the future.

This modest bill spends nothing. It simply gives DCF the ability use eligible, unspent funds within the department to fund this pilot program. Should no such funds become available, the pilot program will not be funded.

We are strongly urge your support for Senate Bill 663 / Assembly Bill 797, a very small step towards opportunity and success for, particularly, some of Wisconsin's most disadvantaged children.

Sincerely,

The Higher Expectations Leadership Table

- OVER -

Dr. Bryan Albrecht
President, Gateway Technical College

Ann Lee
Senior VP of Strategic Performance, Johnson Financial

John Batten
President & CEO, Twin Disc

Cory Mason
Mayor, City of Racine

Thomas A. Burke
President & CEO, Modine Manufacturing

Matt J. Montemurro
President, Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce

Jonathan Delagrave
Racine County Executive

Jeff Neubauer
Executive Director, Higher Expectations For Racine County

Dr. Deborah Ford
Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Rodney Prunty
President & CPO, United Way of Racine County

Brian French
Vice President, HR – North America, CNH Industrial

Dr. Daniel Ross
Vice President of Medical Affairs, Ascension – All Saints

Jackie Hallberg
President & CEO, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin

Chris Ruud
President, Ruud Family Foundation

Dr. Lolli Haws
Superintendent, Racine Unified School District

Chad Severson
President, InSinkErator

Art Howell
Chief of Police, City of Racine

Dr. John Swallow
President, Carthage College



February 20, 2018

Good Morning Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Shepherd, Interim Director of Early Learning for the Racine Unified School District. I would like to start by thanking you for providing this opportunity to speak on the benefits of full day 4K. I would also like to thank my assemblyperson, Representative Rodriguez, for introducing this bill. As an employee of the Racine Unified School District, and proud resident of Oak Creek, I appreciate her efforts on getting this bill passed.

I have been with RUSD for the last 11 years: 5 years as an early learning teacher and 6 years as an administrator for our early learning programs. I can attest to the positive impact that full day 4K has on closing opportunity gaps because I have witnessed gains in our student assessments.

For the last six years, I have worked with our early learning department to advocate for the creation of full day 4K options for the highest poverty areas in our community. Research supports that early intervention can minimize opportunity gaps and the likelihood that a child will need remediation services before third grade. This research has helped guide our early learning leadership team focus on full day 4K programming in our school district.

Prior to the implementation of our full day programs, student pre-academic readiness scores collected from half-day programs ranged from 35% to 50%. Staff diligently focused on individual goals, parent education and improving developmentally appropriate practice. After 3 years we saw only minimal improvements on our student readiness scores.

The district committed to providing funding to focus on the benefits of full day 4K. Our early learning department worked on creating a pilot program to focus on full day 4K at one site for English and Dual Language students. In the first year, the scores in every category saw double-digit gains, higher than what students were achieving in half-day programs. We noted that year, that our half-day students achieved an overall literacy readiness goal of 52% whereas the full day students achieved 100% on those same goals.

Teachers reported that they did not want to return to half-day programs because of the success their students achieved. At one of our early learning sites, we have had 4 of our full day students get dismissed from special education services. Teachers are teaching more in-depth meaningful curriculum and witnessing gains in Social Emotional Development, Math, Literacy, Language and Cognitive skills.

Brain research supports that early intervention is the key to closing achievement gaps, building high self-esteem, and creating lifelong learners. It is more cost effective to

provide full day 4K than to provide remediation or special education services. While data proves that these full day students are making great gains, we are limited in the number of full day 4k opportunities we can provide due to our families and our district's funding constraints. In order to provide high quality educational environments that will increase school readiness in all areas of development, support for full day 4k is critical. We are asking our teachers to impact the future of some of the highest poverty populations of students in the state - and research shows that full day 4k opportunities both close opportunity gaps early on, and do so in a cost effective way that can save the state, school district, and taxpayers money later on.

The bill before you simply creates a pilot program that the Department of Children and Families can choose to fund with TANF dollars, should those dollars not be allocated for some other purpose. While, I work in Racine, the bill is not specific to Racine or Milwaukee. It would allow this program to exist in any one of your districts as well. The bill is set up as a pilot program because we believe it is our due diligence to prove to you and to taxpayers, that the program is effective and worth the investment.

I want to thank you again for allowing me to speak with you today about the benefits of full-day 4K, and I would very much appreciate the committees' support for the bill. It is my job as an educator to make sure I set up all of our kids for success early on so that they will be college or career ready in the future. The passing of this bill will provide that opportunity!