

BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To: The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism
From: Rep. Bob Kulp
Re: SB 780

Date: February 14, 2018

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing this bill today.

Last September, a Marathon County farmer was killed when his tractor overturned, pinning him underneath it. By the time emergency personnel arrived it was too late, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.

These accidents are too common. According to the latest research available, five Wisconsin citizens and nearly 100 Americans die each year due to similar accidents. These are all the more tragic because they would be so easily prevented by fitting the tractor with a rollbar. Unfortunately, at least half of Wisconsin's estimated 200,000 tractors were manufactured before manufacturers began installing safety equipment like rollbars, and have not been retrofitted.

Since 2012, the National Farm Medicine Center in Marshfield has been offering rebates to farmers for retrofitting their tractors with rollbars. Since then, they have retrofitted 168 tractors.

But thus far the program has run on donations, which are simply not reliable enough to ensure a steady ability to market and run the program. Other states, particularly New York and Minnesota, have similar programs that rely wholly or in part on state funding. We are introducing this bill today to appropriate \$250,000 annually for retrofitting tractors with lifesaving rollbars.

The bill before you will authorize DATCP to issue \$250,000 in grants to farm safety organizations like the National Farm Medicine Center, who can then use that money to reimburse farmers for part of the cost of retrofitting their tractors with rollbars. We hope this will result in more tractors retrofitted, and safer environments for our farmers.

Thank you for your attention to this bill, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Testimony in Support of State Funding for a ROPS Rebate Program

Melissa Ploeckelman

February 14, 2018

Good Morning. My name is Melissa Ploeckelman and I am the Outreach Specialist for the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program.

I was born on a farm in central Wisconsin where safety was a large part of our daily routine. Although I knew the importance of Rollover Protection Structures the price was too high and prior to starting my job as the Outreach Specialist in June 2017, I had not heard about the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program. However, after hearing about the program I have become very excited about sharing the message with everyone around our great state.

As an Outreach Specialist, I talk to a lot of farmers about the ROPS Rebate Program, and they like to tell stories. I would like to share two stories I heard at a conference recently that emphasize the effectiveness of ROPS and the great need for a ROPS Rebate Program in Wisconsin.

Mark recently bought a Kubota tractor that came with a ROPS and a seatbelt. He was mowing a ditch and hit an unexpected bump. He rolled the tractor 360 degrees and it landed back on the wheels. Mark did not think he would ever rollover a tractor. He knew how to drive a tractor and had been doing it well over 40 years. Mark had a few bruises but asked his buddies, can you imagine what would have happened if there hadn't been a rollbar, or if I had chosen not wear my seat belt? Turns out he drove away from the spot without ever needing to even get off the tractor. The ROPS saved his life. Without it, Mark would not have been around to share his story with me.

The second story emphasizes the great need for a ROPS Rebate Program in Wisconsin. A husband and wife came up to a booth I was running to sign up for a ROPS on their tractor. The wife said that they would like to sign up for ROPS for 10 tractors. She said, "We didn't think about it before but after seeing the flyer about the ROPS Rebate Program, we would like to put ROPS on all the tractors on the farm." I explained we can only retrofit one tractor per year for a single farm. The wife said they would just have to install one ROPS a year for the next ten years and the husband proceeded to sign up for the ROPS Rebate Program to get a ROPS on his first of 10 tractors.

These stories are the reason I am here today asking you to help us continue to fund the ROPS Rebate Program. ROPS are effective in preventing injury and death as shown in



the first story and the family in the second story needs the program to stay around for the next 10 years so they can retrofit all of their tractors with life-saving ROPS.

At the beginning of this testimony, I told you I had never heard of the ROPS Rebate Program. After hearing these stories first hand, I returned from the conference, sat down with my dad and we enrolled the Ploeckelman's 1972 Massy Ferguson in the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of this program to help all of our Wisconsin Farm Families.



Testimony in Support of State Funding for a ROPS Rebate Program

Barbara Marlena, PhD

February 14, 2018

Good morning. My name is Barbara Marlena. I direct the Wisconsin ROPS Rebate Program out of the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic. The National Farm Medicine Center, established in 1981, is among the longest standing agricultural health and safety programs in the U.S.

Tractors are the leading cause of death on farms, most frequently due to side and rear overturns. For every rollover death, there are five non-fatal injuries, some of which result in permanent disabilities. The highest rate of these rollover deaths occur in the Midwest and Northeast U.S. It is estimated that within 2 years of a tractor rollover death, 70% of those farms will go out of business. Thus, there is a high personal and economic cost to tractor rollover deaths.

A rollover protection structure or ROPS refers to an operator compartment usually a cab or frame intended to protect farmers from fatal injuries caused by a rollover. A ROPS, when used with a seatbelt is 99% effective in preventing injury or death in the event of a rollover. Unfortunately, more than half of the estimated 220,000 tractors in Wisconsin do not have a ROPS, which did not become standard on tractors until 1985. We believe the farmers most in need of ROPS for their tractors are young and beginning farmers, older farmers, and small scale farmers.

With the goal of reducing deaths and disabling injuries on Wisconsin farms, the National Farm Medicine Center launched the ROPS Rebate Program in October 2012 with seed money from the Auction of Champions, an annual farm safety fundraiser in Marshfield, Wisconsin. The ROPS Rebate Program has 3 components: 1) social marketing to motivate farmers to retrofit their tractors, 2) hotline and website assistance for farmers on ROPS availability and pricing, and 3) rebates of 70%, up to a maximum of \$865 on the cost of retrofitting (includes cost to purchase, ship, and install the ROPS).

This is the 6th year of our ROPS Rebate Program, all funded by generous community donations. We have installed over 200 ROPS on tractors mainly in Central and Western Wisconsin where our donor-base is located. Unfortunately, community donations are not a sustainable way to run our program, as donations fluctuate from year to year and donors are interested in donating to new causes and new programs. Unless we can find alternate sources of funding, this will be the last year we can offer the ROPS Rebate Program.



We are asking the Agriculture Committee for financial support to help us continue the ROPS Rebate Program, so more Wisconsin farmers can retrofit their tractors with life-saving rollbars. Jim Beaver, a Loyal Wisconsin farmer, when speaking of the importance of the ROPS Rebate Program said, "if you could save one farmer's life.....that would be worth quite a bit.....wouldn't it?"

Thank you for your time and attention.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: February 14, 2018
RE: **Testimony on 2017 Senate Bill 780**
TO: The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of Senate Bill (SB) 780. As many of you may know, agricultural production is one of the most hazardous industries in the country. Machinery is one of the leading causes of accidents in farming, including tractor rollovers. The National Tractor Safety Coalition says each year nearly 100 farmers die from tractor overturns.

That's the bad news. The good news is most of these rollover fatalities can be averted. That's where Wisconsin's ROPS Rebate Program comes in. This program offers rebates to retrofit older tractors that do not have an operator compartment structure to protect operators from injury due to rollovers or overturns. The National Farm Medicine Center (NFMC) started the ROPS Rebate Program in 2012 with seed money raised from a farm safety fundraiser in Marshfield. The NFMC ROPS Rebate Program has 3 components: 1) social marketing to persuade farmers to retrofit their tractors, 2.) hotline and website assistance for farmers on ROPS availability and pricing, and 3) rebates up to 70% of the cost of retrofitting up to a maximum cost of \$865.

SB 780 would require DATCP to make a grant to an organization that uses those funds to reimburse the cost of retrofitting a tractor. The organization receiving the funds must spend at least 70% of the grant funds to reimburse the retrofitting costs. The bill also requires the organization to report annually to DATCP on its expenditures of grant funds.

In closing, SB 780 would help to make safe the more than 100,000 tractors in Wisconsin that still need ROPS. Join me in supporting this bill and attempting to make farming safer for young, start-up farmers, older farmers, and small scale farmers across the state. I ask that you support this important piece of legislation.