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WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 523

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Good afternoon, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 523.

Under current law, a person may not operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) without a valid commercial driver license (CDL). There are, however, several exceptions to this general requirement. Under one of those exceptions, farmers, their family members and their employees may operate a CMV without a CDL if:

- (1) the use is within the state of Wisconsin and is within 150 miles of the operator's farm;
- (2) the CMV is used to transport agricultural products, farm machinery, or farm supplies, including hazardous materials, to or from a farm; and
- (3) the CMV is operated and controlled by the farmer.

The current restriction limiting this exception to a 150-mile radius from the farm was consistent with federal law. However, in 2012, the federal 150-mile restriction was amended and federal law now allows states to remove that 150-mile restriction for farmers.

This legislation updates Wisconsin's farmer CDL exception as allowed under federal law to remove the 150-mile radius limitation for farmers operating a CMV within the state. Under this bill, farmers would be allowed to transport agricultural products, farm machinery or farm supplies to or from a farm in a CMV that is owned or controlled by the farmer throughout the state. Under the bill, as under current law, the 150-mile restriction would still apply for the transport of hazardous materials, pursuant to federal law. In addition, any interstate trip – one that crosses any state borders – remains limited to the 150-mile restriction.

Adopting this change would have a positive effect on both farmers and law enforcement. By removing the arbitrary 150-mile radius restriction, both farmers and law enforcement will no longer be burdened with tracking or calculating the exact distance of their trip, as long as the use of the vehicle serves the vital purpose of transporting needed materials to or from their farm within the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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