



Warren Petryk

State Representative • 93rd Assembly District

Date: February 4, 2016

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Representative Petryk

Re: Testimony regarding Assembly Bill 748 – Tech Ed Equipment Grant Bill

Good afternoon Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee. I appreciate this opportunity to come before you today to enthusiastically speak in favor of Assembly Bill 748. I also want to thank Representative Horlacher for his support on this bill.

As we all know, manufacturing has always been the backbone industry of Wisconsin. In today's technology-based world, this industry has evolved tremendously and more and more we hear from those experts and managers within the industry that they are in desperate need of qualified, skilled workers. Currently, there are not enough students enrolling in the types of educational courses that help fulfill this industry's desperate need for qualified employees. As the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development, I am very pleased to co-author such a positive, pro-growth piece of legislation to help Wisconsin continue to move forward. This bill will provide significant state investment in the future hope of our State, our young people and their ability to become employed in highly rewarding careers in the technical trades.

Assembly Bill 748 will provide grants to school districts to encourage participation in technical education courses and ultimately, family-sustaining careers in manufacturing. Under our bill, a school district could apply for a matching grant ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Schools would need to secure matching funds from area private businesses and/or other community assistance. With these funds, schools would work in collaboration with local manufacturing businesses to provide students with the hands-on experience they require by using the grant funds to acquire the sophisticated high-tech equipment they will be utilizing when they enter advanced manufacturing fields. With this bill, we will become more able to help students transition into high-demand, good-paying jobs across Wisconsin.

The Department of Workforce Development would be responsible for administering this program and the Wisconsin Fast Forward program would receive an additional \$1 million per fiscal year 2015-16 and 2016-17 for this grant. Also, the bill requires the Department to establish a public and private sector Committee comprised of five people from the department, private organizations in advanced manufacturing, and anyone else the Secretary deems suitable for this Committee. This Committee would establish the grant criteria and would accept and award the grant applications.

Any school district that receives this grant will be required to file a report with the Department by September 1st of the first three fiscal years following the fiscal year in which the grant was awarded. Within this report, the school district will describe: how the money was used; the outcomes achieved; share best practices used by the school district regarding training of students; include a sustainability plan for the training; and provide any other details the Department may determine necessary under their promulgated rules.

Assembly Bill 748 would be a wonderful step toward helping Wisconsin meet the increasing skilled-worker demands that are ongoing in today's sophisticated and highly-technical manufacturing industry. The Senate Committee on Economic Development and Commerce passed the senate bill (SB 523) unanimously. I humbly ask for your support on this very important piece of legislation. Thank you for your kind attention.



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: February 4, 2016

To: Assembly Committee on Education

From: State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

RE: Assembly Bill 748 – Technical Education Equipment Grant

Dear Chair Thiesfeldt and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 748 which would provide technical educational equipment grants to local school districts.

I am introducing this legislation at the request of two manufacturers in my district in an effort to help attract and prepare high school students for careers in advanced manufacturing. As employers who are actively involved in building a skilled workforce, they recognize the importance of up-to-date equipment in our school shops and providing students with hands on experience.

Under this legislation, school districts could apply for a matching grant up to \$50,000. Schools would be required to secure a 2 to 1 match from non-state funds, with matching funds coming from collaborating manufacturers or businesses. To be eligible, schools must demonstrate a need and provide projected outcomes, and once grants are awarded, the grantee must report the outcome for 3 years.

This program is designed to promote greater participation in tech ed courses and careers in manufacturing. In addition, this program encourages schools to work in collaboration with local manufacturers to provide students with hands-on experience using up-to-date manufacturing equipment and software.

This program would be administered by the Department of Workforce Development directed to establish a committee of five individuals from different geographic areas of the state and different job sectors. The committee would be responsible for establishing criteria on which grant applications would be considered. Grant applications could be considered at any time during the year. Grants awarded would be required to be spent within one year of receipt.

I urge your support for this legislation in our effort to encourage careers in technical education and to address our workforce needs. I would be happy to respond to any questions you might have.

Assembly Committee on Education

Representative Thiesfeldt (Chair)
Representative Kitchens (Vice-Chair)
Representative Jagler
Representative Knudson
Representative Rodriguez
Representative R. Brooks
Representative Horlacher
Representative Murphy

Representative Quinn
Representative Hutton
Representative Duchow
Representative Pope
Representative Sinicki
Representative Genrich
Representative Barnes
Representative Considine

Committee Clerk
Hariah Hutkowski

Testimony of Dan Conroy, Vice President of Human Resources (Ret.) Nexen Group, Inc.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this committee about **Assembly Bill 748**. I am excited about the good it will do, and enthusiastically endorse it.

Nexen is like so many advanced manufacturers located all over Wisconsin. We benefit from the great people, great schools, Midwestern work ethic and quality of life that Wisconsin offers. We have been successful because of our investment and embrace of the latest technology. We provide high paying jobs, and that's good for local economy and the state economy overall.

Highly skilled jobs like CNC Machinists, Maintenance Technicians, Precision Welders, Engineers, etc. are in high demand, and job openings often go unfilled because qualified applicants are not available. We believe more individuals would attend our technical colleges and universities for these careers if they had a better chance to experience in tech-ed.

Our middle school and high school tech-ed programs try to get by within their school budgets, but too often their labs and work areas are ill equipped. We have seen first hand how a tech-ed program can re-invent it self, and really engage students if they partner with local businesses, and modernize their shop.

Nexen has partnered with numerous school districts in this regard. Tiger Manufacturing in Webster, and Cardinal Manufacturing in Eleva-Strum are leading edge examples of vibrant and engaged tech-ed programs, and have received state and national recognition. The success of these programs goes beyond learning these skills and experiencing potential career futures. Students learn the soft skills like communication, teamwork, problem solving, work effort, etc. that employers so want to see. The students gain confidence and a deeper understanding of what matters in the real world.

AB748 is designed to help forge partnerships between business, community and schools to invest in Career and Technical Education. We have witnessed firsthand what an amazing transformation can take place in Career and Technical Education with thoughtful investment in their equipment. This bill can do good things for schools and communities across the state. It is good for students and their teachers, it is good for businesses, it is good for communities, and it is good for the state's economy. I encourage your support and passage of this bill.

Kind Regards,

Dan Conroy
Vice President of Human Resources (Ret.)
Nexen Group, Inc.

2015 Assembly Committee on Education

Regarding: AB748

Testimony of Mark Tyler, President of OEM Fabricators, Inc. in favor of AB748

Representative Thiesfeldt (Chair)
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I'm writing to ask for your consideration and support of Assembly Bill 748. Dan Conroy, another manufacturer and I have been working to amplify manufacturers concerns about the skills gap and workforce development for over a decade now. As we have visited high school technical education departments, we have found that many are woefully under equipped to address getting students on the path to a career in advanced manufacturing. The desire is there, but the resources are not.

We have seen success in many forms, but there are some common ingredients to the successful programs that we have seen. An energized teacher, a supportive superintendent, and an engaged business partner are the needed components to building or rebuilding a robust and relevant career and technical education program.

We have observed in many cases where a seed of investment can transform programs and as a result, we began to advocate for a small collaborative program where districts could get a leg up to help build their programs assuming the needed components to the recipe were in place.

Assembly Bill 748 does exactly that. It is a small micro grant program designed to provide that seed. The grants from the state would be from \$10,000 to \$50,000. But they would require matching parts from a business partner and the school district. This means that if the magic recipe is not in place in the form of commitment and participation, it's a non-starter. It's kind of a self-monitoring mechanism; if the business connection and district support isn't in place, there is no state support either.

Even if a school district gains the partners and the grant isn't funded, the relationship has been formed and we think there will residual benefit in that alone.

There is certainly a job development/economic development component to this, there is also a human side. I want to share my personal story to demonstrate that piece.

As a student in elementary and even middle school I was labeled as slow, lazy, and not capable of keeping up. An unfortunate part of this story was that my parents and I accepted that assessment as the truth. We didn't know any better. In the fourth grade, I did so poorly that I received straight F's on my report card for math. I was surely destined to fail in life. So I muddled along and in middle school, I did what all the slow and disengaged kids did. I signed up for shop class.

I was fortunate that the school I attended had wood shop, metal shop, and even a print shop. As I attended these classes, a transformation started to occur. I started to learn. Math became easy as long as there was an application for it. Fractions and proportions, geometry and algebra all started to make sense. For me, shop class, (Technical Education) became a bridge to academics. I wasn't slow, I wasn't lazy, I wasn't going to fail, but I was going to learn differently than many of the other students.

It's not just me; lots of students are visual, hands-on learners. During the seventies and eighties as budgets tightened and the emphasis moved in the direction of only preparing students for the University; students like me were lost. We continued to be labeled and frequently dropped out altogether. They failed, because we failed them.

Today, the laws of supply and demand and economics are holding true. We've lost much of the supply of these students that became tradesmen and tradeswomen, yet the demand remains. So we begin to see incomes in the trades beginning to exceed those of University graduates. I'm not necessarily saying that's a bad outcome, but the students today that are left behind is a bad outcome.

We need our high schools to rebuild their Career and Technical Education programs and engage not only the folks like me that need another way to learn, but also to give high academic achievers to opportunity experience applied learning. The real magic is when you introduce a high academic achiever to applied learning. That's exactly what UW Stout does as Wisconsin's Polytechnic University. Incidentally, their post-graduation placement rate is 97.1%

AB 748 is designed to help rebuild the delivery mechanism for Career and Technical Education in our High Schools. It dovetails very well with the introduction of our Academic and Career Plans process in Wisconsin and it provides a needed leg up for small districts that have few resources or other options to rebuild their programs.

Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce has been talking with manufacturers across the state and studying this issue of the skills gap and student preparation. I'm pleased that WMC has signed on and endorses this legislation.

The bill requests one million dollars per year for this effort administered by the Department of Workforce Development. I know budgets are tight, but the leveraging of local resources and the development of business and school relationships should provide tremendous returns for the students and for the businesses and ultimately the state. Please consider supporting and advocating for this legislation.

Thank you very much.

Mark Tyler
President, OEM Fabricators