



EDWARD BROOKS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Testimony – Assembly Bill 730
Assembly Committee on Rural Development & Mining

January 4, 2018

Chairman VanderMeer and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in favor of Assembly Bill 730, which establishes Rural Opportunity Zones in the state of Wisconsin.

As someone who has spent his entire life in rural Wisconsin, I know that our communities have a lot to offer young families. However, Wisconsin's small towns and villages are not exempt from the trends of the last fifty years. The American population has been shifting away from rural areas toward cities and suburbs, and many rural counties in Wisconsin are losing or barely maintaining population.

Loss of population causes a downward spiral. As a population decreases, local businesses lose their consumer base, and new businesses look to locate elsewhere as the workforce shrinks. School districts that lose population also lose funding, which leads to fewer class offerings, and fewer incentives that would attract young high quality teachers to the district. We need to find a way to maintain and grow our population.

To that end, we are proposing AB 730 which would create rural opportunity zones, much like what Kansas has done and Oklahoma is currently looking at pursuing. Rural Opportunity Zones would incentivize young people looking to relocate after finishing their post-secondary education.

In our vision of the program, Wisconsin would repay up to \$25,000 or 40% of a new resident's student loans, provided the new resident maintained a full time job, avoided public assistance, had attained a post-secondary degree, and settled in a county that fit the Federal OMB's definition of rural.

This is an idea whose time has come. Governor Walker recently announced he wants \$6.8 million for an ad campaign to attract millennials to Wisconsin, with \$300K specifically towards a services and recruitment for rural Wisconsin. Plus, targeting young professionals five years out of college, is when people start thinking long term about where they want to be when they start a family and Millennials, especially, are focused on student debt relief.



TOM TIFFANY

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 730 Assembly Committee on Rural Development and Mining January 4, 2017

Thank you Chairwoman VanderMeer and committee members for allowing me to submit written testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 730.

Rural Wisconsin's population is declining and growing older. High schools in the Northwoods are seeing their enrollment drop, sometimes nearly 30 percent over the last 10 years. This is not a recipe for economic prosperity and it certainly points to the belief that young people are moving elsewhere for employment opportunities.

The brain drain out of Wisconsin has been well-documented. I believe that Wisconsin has the opportunity to reverse this trend partly by expanding rural job opportunities in new fields such as mining, and partly by attracting young workers to move to rural Wisconsin. To that end, Assembly Bill 730 establishes rural opportunity zones to incentivize young people looking to relocate after completing their post-secondary degree.

Under the bill, the State of Wisconsin would repay up to \$25,000 or 40% of a new resident's student loans provided that this individual maintained a full-time job, avoided public assistance programs, and completed a post-secondary degree program. In order to qualify, the individual must reside in a county that meets the Federal OMB's definition of rural.

A similar program has been in place for the past four years in Kansas and it has attracted over 1,000 new residents. I believe that incentivizing young workers to move to rural Wisconsin provides the forward momentum needed to bring a brain gain to all of our rural communities. I encourage your support for this proposal.

County	fips	ST	CBSA2015 Update
Adams	55001	WI	Neither
Ashland	55003	WI	Neither
Barron	55005	WI	Neither
Bayfield	55007	WI	Neither
Brown	55009	WI	Metro
Buffalo	55011	WI	Neither
Burnett	55013	WI	Neither
Calumet	55015	WI	Metro
Chippewa	55017	WI	Metro
Clark	55019	WI	Neither
Columbia	55021	WI	Metro
Crawford	55023	WI	Neither
Dane	55025	WI	Metro
Dodge	55027	WI	Micro
Door	55029	WI	Neither
Douglas	55031	WI	Metro
Dunn	55033	WI	Micro
Eau Claire	55035	WI	Metro
Florence	55037	WI	Micro
Fond du Lac	55039	WI	Metro
Forest	55041	WI	Neither
Grant	55043	WI	Micro
Green	55045	WI	Metro
Green Lake	55047	WI	Neither
Iowa	55049	WI	Metro
Iron	55051	WI	Neither
Jackson	55053	WI	Neither
Jefferson	55055	WI	Micro
Juneau	55057	WI	Neither
Kenosha	55059	WI	Metro
Kewaunee	55061	WI	Metro
La Crosse	55063	WI	Metro
Lafayette	55065	WI	Neither
Langlade	55067	WI	Neither
Lincoln	55069	WI	Micro
Manitowoc	55071	WI	Micro
Marathon	55073	WI	Metro
Marinette	55075	WI	Micro
Marquette	55077	WI	Neither
Menominee	55078	WI	Micro
Milwaukee	55079	WI	Metro
Monroe	55081	WI	Neither
Oconto	55083	WI	Metro
Oneida	55085	WI	Neither
Outagamie	55087	WI	Metro
Ozaukee	55089	WI	Metro

Pepin	55091	WI	Neither
Pierce	55093	WI	Metro
Polk	55095	WI	Neither
Portage	55097	WI	Micro
Price	55099	WI	Neither
Racine	55101	WI	Metro
Richland	55103	WI	Neither
Rock	55105	WI	Metro
Rusk	55107	WI	Neither
St. Croix	55109	WI	Metro
Sauk	55111	WI	Micro
Sawyer	55113	WI	Neither
Shawano	55115	WI	Micro
Sheboygan	55117	WI	Metro
Taylor	55119	WI	Neither
Trempealeau	55121	WI	Neither
Vernon	55123	WI	Neither
Vilas	55125	WI	Neither
Walworth	55127	WI	Micro
Washburn	55129	WI	Neither
Washington	55131	WI	Metro
Waukesha	55133	WI	Metro
Waupaca	55135	WI	Neither
Waushara	55137	WI	Neither
Winnebago	55139	WI	Metro
Wood	55141	WI	Micro
TOTAL			72
Metro			<u>26</u>
<u>Counties that Qualify</u>			<u>46</u>