Luther S. Olsen
State Senator
14th District

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Senator Luther Olsen
DATE: Tuesday, December 19, 2017
SUBJECT: Testimony for Senate Bill 494

Thank you members of the Senate Committee on Education for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify in support of Senate Bill 494 (SB 494).

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is required to publish report cards in order to determine the efficiency of educational programs offered throughout our state by September. In order to calculate the proficiency of a school or district, DPI needs the assessment data from the ACT, Forward, and Dynamic Learning Maps exams. Processing this information is time consuming and takes months to complete.

Testing was previously done each fall with the data being released to DPI in the spring, which allowed them to put together the report cards in the summer. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year we began testing students in the spring due to the implementation of 2013 WI Act 20, so now the testing data isn't released until July. Once the data is received it is then sent to the Value-Added Research Center (VARC) to run the value added growth calculation, which is a requirement DPI needs for the school and school district report cards they create.

The changes that were made to the testing timeline and the additional requirement of using VARC make it impossible to have report cards completed and published by September. This bill moves the publication date of the report cards to November, rather than September. In addition to the publication date, it will also change the date by which DPI must determine eligibility of a school to be placed in the Opportunity Schools and Partnership Program (OSPP) from October 15 to November 30.

These changes give the department the proper time needed to accurately assess each school's capabilities and progress, while also ensuring ample time for the process of determining eligibility for the OSPP. This will ultimately benefit all school districts across the state and increase the effectiveness of these reports.

Again, thank you for holding a hearing today. I ask for your support on SB 494 and I would be more than happy to answer any questions.

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

Senate Committee on Education
December 19, 2017

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony - Senate Bill 494

Senator Olsen and members of the committee, thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill (SB) 494. This bill requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to publish its annual school and school district accountability report by November 30, rather than in September. Additionally, the bill moves the eligibility determination date for the Opportunity School Partnership Program (OSPP) from October 15 to November 30, commensurate with report card publication.

DPI requested a modification of the district and school report cards publication timeline, as statutory requirements adopted in the last few years make the current law timeline impossible. The major changes have been:

(1) The implementation of spring testing for the Forward, Dynamic Learning Maps, and ACT exams adopted under 2013 Act 20; and
(2) The required use of value-added growth adopted under 2015 Act 55.

Until the 2014-15 school year, the state assessment was given in the fall, which allowed significantly more time for DPI staff to load and process the data for report cards. Additionally, until that year, DPI worked with a single test vendor for all English language arts and mathematics testing. There are now three assessment vendors, which means more data loads, more coordination, and more time. Finally, the prior method for calculating growth, student growth percentiles, could be calculated internally at DPI, providing greater ability to manage the timeline. The mandated use of value-added requires an external vendor, which takes longer and introduces more variables into the process.

If adopted, SB 494 will codify the practice and timeline implemented in 2017.

Background

Overview of process: To produce report card results at the school- or district-level, DPI needs the assessment data from the Forward, ACT, and Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)[1] exams. Since all three are required to calculate scores, work cannot start to run report cards until the last assessment data are received and loaded into DPI's data warehouse. In other words, the slowest common denominator limits the process. In general, most assessment data are usually available to DPI by mid-July.

Once the data is merged and quality assured (QA), the data is sent to the Value-Added Research Center, which runs the value-added calculations. With preliminary and final files, this process generally takes about month to complete.

Once the assessment data are all loaded, and DPI receives the value-added data back from our vendor,

[1] DLM is the alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

DPI creates preliminary report cards, which are then made available to districts in a secure release for review. The review, which DPI calls an Inquiry Process, provides school and district staff an opportunity to identify data corrections they may need to make. The inquiry process can result in changes based on submitted evidence. Timing for the final public release of the accountability reports is largely dependent on the magnitude of inquiries, which have increased in recent years with the statutory changes to report card calculations and integration of schools participating in parental choice programs.

Prior requests: Previously, DPI has communicated the publication timeline challenges to legislative committees, the Governor's Office, and the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB). LFB included an option in *2015 LFB Paper #531* (alternative 3g) that would have modification the publication timeline to "fall."

2015 LFB Paper #531 (Alternative 3g)

> 29. DPI staff indicate that, following the transition to spring testing beginning in 2014-15, it may be preferable to require that the report cards are published annually in the fall, rather than specifying that they must be published in September, because data files with results from spring assessments are not available until the summer or early fall. The additional time would be particularly beneficial for years in which a new assessment is administered, as is the case in 2014-15 and would also be the case in 2015-16 under the bill, because additional work is required to link data from new assessments with data from prior year assessments. DPI staff indicates that a later release would also be necessary in future years to allow time for a secure release of data to school districts to allow them to review their results and check for any data errors prior to the public release of the report cards. In 2014, preliminary report cards were released to schools and school districts approximately one month before they were publicly available. [Alternative 3g]

While this recommendation was not adopted, Legislators were receptive to making a change. The primary concern was the "fall" was too ambiguous and there was a preference for a specific month. Based on that feedback, discussion with stakeholders, and engagement with the various vendors involved, a November 30 publication date was recommended.

This recommendation reflects current practice. In 2017, the district and school accountability reports were published on Tuesday, November 21. The OSPP notification letters were also sent at that time because OSPP eligibility is based primarily on a district's performance on the report card. Given the number of inquiries and greater variation in scoring seen over the last few years, making initial notifications based on preliminary data is no longer feasible.

We would be happy to answer any questions.