



TONY KURTZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2019 Assembly Bill 258

Relating to: Marquette University School of Dentistry Rural Scholarship Program and making an appropriation.

Public Hearing: Assembly Committee on Health
August 14, 2019

Thank you, Chairman Sanfelippo, and thank you to my colleagues on the Assembly Committee on Health for holding a public hearing on my bill, Assembly Bill 258 (AB 258).

One important aspect to healthcare is that of dental care. Unfortunately, over half of the counties in our state have been federally designated as a Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs). The intent of this legislation is to help improve access to dental care in our most sparsely populated areas: rural Wisconsin.

The point of AB 258 is to incentive new dentists to set up practice in rural Wisconsin. The idea of this bill is similar to previous legislation that the Wisconsin State Legislature created to incentivize and attract other profession to rural areas. This bill would require the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB) to work with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to create a scholarship program that would award five \$75,000 scholarships annually to students at the Marquette University School of Dentistry. Students would be eligible for up to four years on the scholarship, and in return, would be expected to complete 18 months of practice in the qualifying Dental HPSA for each annual scholarship accepted. Students who accept the scholarship but fail to practice in a qualifying area would be liable to the state for an amount determined by the number of months the student failed to meet the requirement.

In addition to the cost of the scholarships, this bill also allocates funding to assist Marquette University by providing some of the financial support for the University's costs to administer the program. These funds would help support educational instruction and care at affiliated dental clinics in rural areas. These funds would be used to cover the cost of transportation, lodging, clinical supplies, and other costs associated with a program of this nature.

I thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. I would be honored to have earned your support of AB 258.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: August 14th, 2019
RE: Testimony on 2019 Assembly Bill 258
TO: The Assembly Committee on Health
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

I would like to thank Chairman Sanfelippo and the members of the Assembly Committee on Health for accepting my written testimony on Assembly Bill 258 (AB 258) today.

Rep. Kurtz and I have worked together to develop this piece of bi-partisan legislation to help alleviate the dental care needs of underserved Wisconsinites in rural areas. This bill would help improve the quality of Wisconsin's dental workforce in thirty-nine underserved counties by incentivizing dental students to locate to these counties after graduation.

AB 258 creates a \$75,000 annual scholarship program at Wisconsin's only dental school – the Marquette University School of Dentistry which would be administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). For each twelve month period that a student is under scholarship, that recipient must practice for eighteen months in one of the thirty-nine federally recognized Dental Health Professional Shortage Areas (DHPSA) counties stipulated in the bill.

In the past, the legislature has seen fit to work on programs that incentivize settlement and practice in rural areas because studies show that professionals who are trained and establish themselves in these areas tend to stay there once settled.

When operating at full strength, this program would be able to fund the education of five students per class year in dental school. In addition to the cost of the scholarships, this legislation also assists Marquette University by providing roughly half of the University's costs to administer the program. These funds would help support educational instruction and care at affiliated dental clinics in rural areas. Additionally, these funds are used to cover the cost of transportation, lodging, clinical supplies, and other costs associated with a program of this nature.

I'd encourage members of the committee to join me in supporting this bill and improving dental access for rural Wisconsinites.