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To: The Senate Committee on Economic Development, Commerce, and Trade
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: Senate Bill 17

Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

Senate Bill 17 creates a new arm of the Fast Forward program to support upskilling programs.

Upskilling, sometimes also referred to as micro-credentialing, is defined as the process of learning new skills. Upskilling programs are a quicker way to meet workforce needs than a more traditional technical school diploma or college degree. The concept has been embraced by private sector companies as a way to improve their current workforce and has a host of opportunities for public sector use. Other countries and states have begun to implement upskilling programs, including states as close to home as Iowa. While all upskilling programs look different, they serve a common goal: get individuals into well-paying, high-need jobs in order to better the individual's life and the community's workforce.

This bill creates a new arm of Fast Forward with \$2 million in funding over the biennium to provide grants to non-profits and institutions of higher education to create and administer upskilling programs to unemployed or under-employed individuals. We view this as a capacity building grant program to reduce the cost to the consumer

Lakeshore Technical College administered a successful micro-credentialing pilot program in their region of the state and provided some helpful insight as to how the program this bill creates could be useful. The average adult student's income at Lakeshore Technical College is \$19,300. Programs at technical colleges that do not result in either a Technical Diploma or Associate Degree are not eligible for most types of state or federal financial aid. Therefore, unless funding was provided, the average student would struggle to afford enrollment in an upskilling program, therefore hindering their ability to better their economic outlook and help ease Wisconsin's workforce shortage. This bill states that non-profits and higher education institutions receiving upskilling funding cannot charge participants tuition or program fees in excess of 10% of the cost of administering the program to ensure that students have skin in the game without being priced out of participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



MIKE ROHRKASTE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To: Senator Feyen and members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Commerce and Trade

From: Representative Mike Rohrkaste, 55th Assembly District

Date: February 13, 2019

Re: 2019 Senate Bill 17

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 17, creating a program to support “upskilling” programs.

I believe the most important issue facing our state is the need to attract and retain high-quality workers to fill the thousands of open jobs we have available. We need to ensure that families can find prosperity and opportunity in Wisconsin. To do so, we need to guarantee that they will have access to sustaining, fulfilling careers. In an ever-changing job market, that means we need to have workforce development programs that are nimble and tailored to local needs.

The private sector, as well as notable public sector programs around the country and world, have begun to embrace “micro-credentialing,” sometimes called “upskilling,” as a rapid response to a community’s workforce needs. Their goal is simple: quickly train individuals to secure high-demand, well-paying jobs.

Many students in technical college have a lower income while pursuing their education. To help them afford this opportunity, this bill not only creates a grant to grow their institution’s upskilling program, it also limits the amount a non-profit or institution can charge for tuition or program fees.

I believe this type of workforce development investment will help Wisconsinites adapt to the opportunities available in their communities. Thank you again for your consideration.

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Commerce and Trade
FROM: Laura Kite, Assistant Dean for Student Services
DATE: February 13, 2019
RE: Senate Bill 17 Testimony- For Information Only

My name is Laura Kite, and I am the Assistant Dean for Student Services at UW Extended Campus. On behalf of UW Extended Campus, thank you to Chairman Feyen and the members of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Commerce and Trade for hearing testimony today on SB 17. Also, thank you to Senator Feyen and Representative Rohrkaste for authoring this bill on upskilling and micro-credentials.

UW Extended Campus provides statewide access to university resources and research so Wisconsin residents can learn, grow, and succeed throughout their lives. We were formerly a division of UW-Extension, but we are now a spin-off enterprise of UW System after UW System's Restructuring Initiative. Partnering with all 13 campuses, UW Extended Campus's role is to coordinate and expand University of Wisconsin professional and continuing education aimed at adult and professional students. We deliver innovative models of education, like the UW Flex Option and our Collaborative Degrees, to connect students with world class programs at each of our campuses. Micro-credentials/badges are increasingly popular and useful, and it is an area in which UW Extended Campus is developing programs.

The segment of the population that either has no degree or some college credits and are looking for additional education is substantial, and it continues to grow in Wisconsin. We think that micro-credentials/badges and other nondegree options are going to grow as a popular way to upskill the workforce. There is a wide-range of people at all points of their career that can benefit from these opportunities. From the front desk employee who is looking to learn better customer service skills, to the middle manager who is looking to become more proficient in communication, to a seasoned professional who wants to learn coding. Micro-credentials are a way to be rapidly responsive to workforce needs, especially for a population who is not able to access the traditional forms for higher education.

There are two roles we can play in micro-credentialing/badges: the content and the credential. UW Extended Campus and others can curate content, however, our real value is on the credential side. Through demonstration and competency-based education models, students can pass assessments to prove they mastered content and then receive a UW branded credential. These credentials can be credit-bearing or noncredit. For example, our competency-based UW Flexible Option programs are mostly offered for credit, but we also offer a noncredit certificate. Likewise, our online certificate, bachelors and masters Collaborative Degrees are semester-based and credit-bearing. Micro-credentials/badges are different. They may not be credit bearing and are priced to make them an accessible option to receive a UW credential for those interested in upskilling and progressing in their career.

We look forward to continuing conversations and efforts to respond to workforce needs by offering innovative solutions and access to a quality UW education. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide information on SB 17. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

You can learn more about UW Extended Campus at: <https://ce.uwex.edu/>

You can learn more about the UW Flexible Option at: <https://flex.wisconsin.edu/>

You can learn more about Collaborative Degrees at: <https://ce.uwex.edu/for-students/online-degrees/>