



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17th SENATE DISTRICT

February 6, 2020

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions Testimony on Senate Bill 563

Thank you committee members for hearing Senate Bill 563 (SB 563), which increases funding by \$1 million annually to support the work of state integrated specialists who conduct applied agricultural research. Thank you Sen. Testin and Sen. Ringhand for co-authoring this bipartisan legislation.

One way to keep Wisconsin's \$104.8 billion agricultural industry strong is to support the work of state integrated specialists at UW-Madison's Division of Extension. These state specialists **conduct** applied agricultural research and **provide** practical and tangible expertise to directly assist farmers and producers by conducting research on important topics such as water quality, pest management, and farm economics. They then share their knowledge and answer tough questions. They also spend time traveling to farms and disseminating valuable information directly to farmers.

Housed at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) at UW-Madison with joint Division of Extension appointments, their peer-reviewed research addresses some of the most pressing questions facing Wisconsin farmers today. Their research and teaching lead directly to improved farm practices across Wisconsin and around the country. With the recent investment in the *Dairy Innovation Hub*, the work of these state integrated specialists will become even more important.

In addition to state integrated specialists, the Division of Extension at UW-Madison partially funds county-based extension educators. In contrast to the state specialists, the county-based extension educators **transmit** the relevant educational programming that was researched and developed by the state integrated specialists by answering questions from farmers. These county-based extension educators act as an intermediary, or middle-man, between farmers and scientists.

Unfortunately, since 1993 the number of CALs state specialists has fallen 45% and funding has been reduced by nearly \$1 million. Less research is being conducted and in turn, less information is being shared with our farmers.

After receiving input directly from farmers and agriculture groups, **I heard that funding for the state integrated specialists is the most important investment the state can make in the Division of Extension.** To reinvest in these important state specialists, SB 563 provides \$1 million each year to fund state specialist positions in the field of applied agricultural research in CALs at UW-Madison Division of Extension.

After receiving input from the agriculture industry, SB 563 gives the Division of Extension the flexibility to determine which positions it would fill. In its fiscal note, the UW-System indicates it will be able to fill at least six positions with the increase in funding. As stated, the filled positions would include those related to dairy economics, farm facilities design and environmental management, and food product safety, among others.

This funding will have a major positive impact on agriculture across the state and keep Wisconsin on the cutting edge of agricultural innovation.

SB 563 is supported by numerous farm and agriculture-related organizations including the Farm Bureau Federation, Wisconsin Independent Businesses, Inc., and the Dairy Business Association. Thank you again to the committee for hearing this proposal, and your timely action on the bill.



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: February 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 563

Thank you Chairman Marklein and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions for holding a hearing on SB 563 today. Mr. Chairman, I would like to especially thank you today for your proven commitment to agriculture, our farmers, agri-business stakeholders and everyone connected to Wisconsin's \$104 billion agriculture economy 365 days a year, regardless of political whims of fancy, and I'm proud to have had the opportunity to author this piece of legislation with you.

Those of us that are actively and regularly engaged with agriculture stakeholders know that there are a number of ways that we as a legislative body can help farmers and producers themselves, and help maintain and grow our agriculture economy. I think it's important to note - and I want to especially point this out today based on larger discussions and related proposals that are circulating currently in the capitol - that one of the best things that we can do is stay the heck out of their way. I want to point out that *not* subjecting farmers and producers to onerous rules and regulations and excessively taxing them and their businesses is one of the most effective things we can do to help farmers. That said, as we're all aware, a certain degree of regulation is needed at the local, state, and federal level, but the primary premise aforementioned holds true.

In addition, it's necessary for the state to partner with farmers and producers in various ways, including, but not limited to, offering resources, especially in the form of leveraging our university system as we're trying to do here, and making available certain funding in the form of grants and incentives for the industry to flourish. One of the most effective ways to keep Wisconsin's \$104.8 billion agriculture industry strong is to support the work of UW-Extension research faculty, especially state integrated specialists. These specialists conduct applied agricultural research and provide practical and tangible expertise to directly assist farmers and producers. Housed at the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at UW-Madison, their peer-reviewed research addresses some of the most pressing questions facing Wisconsin farmers today. Their research and teaching directly lead to improved farm practices across Wisconsin.

Currently, state integrated specialists are researching important topics such as water quality, pest management, and farm economics. Unfortunately, since 1993, funding has been cut by almost \$1 million. As a result, less research is being conducted and in turn, less information is being shared with our farmers.



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

To reinvest in these state integrated specialists, SB 563 provides \$1 million each year to fund state specialist positions in the field of applied agricultural research at CALS at UW-Madison. With input from the agriculture community and taking into account the current needs of the industry, SB 563 gives UW-Extension the ability to determine which areas these reinstated positions would research. For example, some potential research areas may include beef production, forage, and farmstead planning.

This legislation is supported by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, the Wisconsin Pork Association, the Wisconsin Soybean Association, the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association and the Dairy Business Association.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today and the opportunity for a public hearing on this legislation.



Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue, and Financial Institutions

2019 Senate Bill 563

Funding for certain extension services at UW System

February 6, 2020

Good morning Chairman Marklein and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue, and Financial Institutions. My name is Ben Van Pelt and I am the Assistant Director of State Relations for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am joined today by Doug Reinemann, who is the Associate Dean for Outreach and Extension in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) at UW-Madison. He is also a professor and Extension Specialist in the Biological Systems Engineering Department in the College of Ag. I am also joined by UW-Madison Division of Extension Dean, Karl Martin. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 563 (SB 563), which provides additional funding for the crucial work being done in the field of applied agriculture by CALs faculty.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison appreciates the authors' intent to highlight the importance of state specialists in CALs that focus on applied agriculture and their impact on the future of agriculture in Wisconsin. CALs Extension faculty perform the research that is extended to the agricultural community to help agriculture remain a profitable and sustainable contributor to rural communities and the state's economy. The cutting-edge research to support agriculture is becoming more and more important as agriculture is becoming an increasingly competitive, technological and data-driven enterprise.

Extension faculty identify research topics through dialogue with farmers and their service providers. These CALs faculty then identify sources of funding to perform research. Funding sources include the USDA and other federal funding sources, statewide commodity groups, state agencies and private companies. An important role of CALs Extension faculty is to stay apprised of the latest technology advancements and, in many cases, create new technologies for agriculture. More often than not, the process of developing new technology is a result of the unique creative partnership between CALs Extension faculty and agricultural producers in Wisconsin who are looking for innovative ways to farm.

This work manifests in many ways across the state. For instance, as you may have already heard, faculty from our Department of Horticulture have worked to coordinate the Network for Environment and Weather Applications in the state. This is a network of weather stations across Wisconsin that help cranberry growers adjust production practices based on their local weather conditions.

Similarly, faculty and staff have also developed new tools and technologies in these roles. A faculty member from our Department of Plant Pathology helped create and release the “Sporecaster” application, which assists farmers in making management decisions for white mold in soybean crops. This mobile app combines site-specific data with research-based models to predict the best timing for white mold treatment in that specific field. It has been downloaded more than 1,600 times and averages more than 250 users a day during “white mold season,” which is July and August.

There are many other examples of this work all across the state of Wisconsin that touch on everything from nitrogen management to developing different produce varieties, and everything in-between. This extension work done by faculty at UW-Madison is wide in its breadth and vital for many across the state. It is also worth noting that this work is not exclusive to the field of agriculture.

In 1990 there were about 70 extension faculty in the College of Agriculture. This has been reduced to approximately 40 today, or a reduction of about 30 extension faculty over the past 3 decades. This is the result of steady reductions in Extension funding in the UW System budget. SB 563 would allow CALS to reverse this trend and invest in this important work.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison appreciates the bill authors recognizing this important work and the additional, much-needed funding this proposal provides. On behalf of the UW-Madison, CALS, and the Division of Extension we would like to thank you for your time and for allowing us to detail the work being done by extension specialists. At this time, we would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.



*Representing UW-Madison Faculty.
Strengthening Wisconsin.*

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions
in Support of SB 563, Providing \$1 Million Per Year in Funding During the Current
Biennium for Extension Services in Applied Agricultural Research**

February 6, 2020

Good morning. I am Professor Steve Ventura, a faculty member in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) at UW-Madison and a member of the University Committee, the elected executive committee of the Faculty Senate. I also serve as a board member of PROFS, the Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate, which represents the interest of the UW-Madison faculty. I do not have an Extension appointment, but throughout my 30+ years as a professor, I have had the pleasure of working with numerous state specialists at UW-Madison and county faculty and staff around the state. I was chair of the faculty committees that guided the return of Cooperative Extension back to Madison, assuring the transfer of tenure and creating an appropriate organizational structure.

Even before the "Wisconsin Idea" was articulated and in the ensuing centuries, UW has worked to improve health, quality of life, the environment, and agriculture for all citizens of Wisconsin and beyond. It is worth noting that UW-Madison is fairly unique in that it includes both a traditional campus -- offering instruction and basic research in the arts, humanities, and sciences -- as well as its land-grant mission focused on applied research and development in agriculture and the "mechanical arts," i.e., engineering. Extension has been and still is a critical component of that research, development, and technology transfer.

Without going into a long litany of accomplishments, it is clear that UW-Madison has a particularly strong history in supporting Wisconsin's agricultural community. UW-Madison faculty and staff have both supported Extension colleagues around the state and been proud to work alongside Wisconsin farmers to keep our rural economy vibrant and strong. More specifically, CALs has long been linked to UW Extension, with many faculty and staff holding joint appointments in CALs and Extension. This connection has been re-energized in recent years as Extension has again become part of UW-Madison.

I am grateful that you are considering additional funding for agriculture specialists. To be clear, "state specialists" in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences -- the target of this bill -- are faculty in UW-Madison departments with an extension appointment as part of their position. They are expected to do applied agricultural research and education/outreach for agricultural professionals. Putting more money into state extension specialists means they will be able to do more research on pressing problems for Wisconsin farmers.

Much remains to be accomplished in terms of the research to support Wisconsin's agriculture through a difficult period of transition. As you know, we are in the midst of a crisis in Wisconsin's dairy industry. Innovations in production and marketing are clearly needed. Wisconsin's farmers are also facing unprecedented challenges from a changing climate; we need to understand the impacts of more severe storms and changing growing conditions, and work with county Extension staff to help farmers adapt. From my own department, Soil Science, we know that healthy soil is critical to protecting our groundwater resources and

sequestering CO₂ while still producing ample yields necessary for economically viable agriculture.

I understand that other legislation will support the work of *county* Extension, which is also a necessary part of understanding issues and delivering innovations to Wisconsin farmers. So, on behalf of PROFS, I would like to thank Senators Marklein, Olsen, Ringhand, Taylor, and Testin, along with the Assembly sponsors, for introducing this important piece of legislation and any other support you can provide for Extension.

We look forward to continuing to work with legislators to ensure a bright and prosperous future for our state's agricultural economy.



February 6, 2020

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions

From: WSCGA Board of Directors and Tom Lochner, Executive Director

Re: **Support SB 563, Funding for UW Integrated State Specialists**

These comments are submitted on behalf of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA) to express our **support for SB 563, which would require the UW Board of Regents to allocate \$2,000,000 (\$1,000,000 annually) in funding for UW state specialists in the field of applied agricultural research.**

WSCGA was formed in 1887 to represent Wisconsin's cranberry growers. We represent about 85% of the annual production in the state. Cranberries are the state's largest fruit crop and Wisconsin annually grows in excess of 60% of the US Crop. The most recent estimates are that cranberry growing contributes over \$1 billion to the state's economy and provides over 4,000 jobs for state residents.

Last week, we held our annual two-day Wisconsin Cranberry School, which features educational presentations from more than ten (10) UW/UWEX faculty and staff. It is our largest educational program each year and we had over 325 participants in the educational sessions.

Many of these sessions are taught by UW integrated state specialists. These researchers bring the latest research and farming practice to the growers twice a year at our winter and summer meetings. They also present at our spring Mini Clinics, Nutrient Management Training and our Pesticide Awareness workshops. Integrated State Specialists are vital to the health of not only Wisconsin cranberry growing, but also to all of farming in Wisconsin. As technology and growing practices change, we need the latest scientifically sound information for our growers to maintain their commitment to sustainable cranberry growing. These researchers are a critical link that supports Wisconsin's farm economy.

However, in recent years, many of these positions have been left vacant. The open positions have included: dairy markets, in the department of agricultural and applied economics; forage, in the department of agronomy; farm finance, in the department of dairy science; milk quality, in the department of dairy science; beef production and swine production, in the department of animal science; insect pest management, in the department of entomology; ruminant nutrition, in the department of dairy science; farmstead planning and storage, in the biological systems engineering program. These positions have not been left vacant because they are unimportant. To the contrary, they are critical to the economic health of Wisconsin's farm economy. They are open because they were not funding priorities within UW. This legislation recognizes their importance to Wisconsin farmers and will ensure that these critical agricultural state specialists' positions can be filled.

We ask you to support SB 563 and pass it during this session of the Legislature.