



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: May 5, 2021

RE: **Testimony on Senate Bills 154 and 155**

TO: The Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you Senator Ballweg and to members of the committee for hearing my testimony on Senate Bills 154 (SB 154) and 155 (SB 155).

Wisconsin is known as America's Dairyland, but our state's farmers are leaders in many forms of agricultural production. Wisconsin's potato crop is the third largest in the country, trailing only Idaho and Washington. When it comes to cranberries, we are the clear national leader. Sixty percent of the nation's cranberries come from twenty Wisconsin counties. I'm proud to represent five of the top ten cranberry producing counties – including the top three, Wood, Jackson, and Monroe.

Combined, potatoes and cranberries account for nearly \$1.5 billion in annual economic activity and provide our constituents with thousands of jobs.

Modern farming is a technologically advanced endeavor. SBs 154 and 155 will help Wisconsin remain a leading agricultural producer by investing in applied agricultural research. This research helps growers increase yields, improve environmental outcomes, and become more efficient. SB 154 provides \$250,000 per year to the Cranberry Marketing Board while SB 155 \$250,000 per year to the Wisconsin Potato Industry Board.

There are approximately 64,800 farms in Wisconsin. Of these, more than 9,200 farms and homes are designated Century farms – properties owned and operated for more than 100 years. Farming isn't just an occupation; it's a way of life. Wisconsin farmers have a unique connection with the land and with their communities. SBs 154 and 155 invests in the future of thousands of men and women in Central and Northern Wisconsin who take pride in producing excellent crops that helps feed the world. Please join me in supporting these investments.



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: May 5, 2021

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 154

Thank you Chairman Ballweg and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism for holding a hearing on SB 154 today. Cranberries are Wisconsin's largest fruit crop and Wisconsin leads the nation in cranberry production. There are about 240 growers in Wisconsin who farm about 21,000 acres of cranberries across 20 counties. Wisconsin growers grow over 65% of the U.S. cranberry crop. A recent economic analysis showed that cranberry growing has a \$1 billion impact on our state's economy and provides over 3,200 Wisconsin jobs.

As the dairy state, when we in the legislature think about farming, we inherently think about dairy; milk, cheese, and the like. That's understandable. But there are a number of farmers and producers that are absolutely vital to our \$104 billion agriculture economy that do not work in dairy, and that includes cranberry producers.

Cranberry grower's success is a direct result of a strong infrastructure and support system for growing, processing and moving cranberries to market. A significant piece of that infrastructure is a strong partnership with Wisconsin researchers. Growers are fortunate to have a group of young, enthusiastic and innovative research and extension faculty working with them to address production problems, discover solutions and new technologies and then transferring this information to growers to allow them to grow a crop in a sustainable manner. Through their marketing order, individual growers and other industry sources, Wisconsin growers provide in excess of \$500,000 in support to research and extension programs each year. These projects look at issues ranging from variety improvement, plant nutrition, water conservation, water quality, insect, disease and weed management, development of sustainable growing practices as well as new technologies to monitor crop progress throughout the growing season.

The Wisconsin cranberry industry has made it's own investment in research by purchasing a 133-acre cranberry farm located in Jackson County to be used as a dedicated cranberry research farm. This cranberry research station will provide a source of sound science for Wisconsin growers, but funding is needed for cranberry research projects and graduate students in order to develop sound, credible science upon which farming practices can be improved. Passage of this legislation would fund research to develop this science that has a direct, positive impact for producers in the field.

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



May 5, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism

From: Tom Lochner, Executive Director, WSCGA

Re: **Support SB 154, Cranberry Marketing Board Grant**

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA), I am here today to ask you to **support SB 154, which would provide \$500,000 over the biennium to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for the purpose of providing a grant to the cranberry marketing board.**

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.

The Wisconsin Cranberry Board is a marketing board created under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 96 and ATCP 142. The Board consists of seven (7) growers who collect, manage and administer marketing funds collected in the form of a check-off from Wisconsin state cranberry growers.

The primary objective of the marketing order is research and promotion of Wisconsin cranberries. This includes the development of new products and new markets; improving methods and practices related to producing, processing, or marketing of cranberries; and providing educational programs for producers, handlers, or consumers. *See* ATCP 142.02(1).

The Wisconsin Cranberry Board funds numerous agricultural research programs with farmer dollars including:

- Research on Cranberry Bud Cold Hardiness (freezing stress);
- Research on Cranberry Pest Management (reducing applications, factors influencing disease, etc.);
- Research on Cranberry Nutrient Management;
- Research on Water conservation and use in cranberries;
- Microwave Sensing Technology to Estimate Cranberry Crop Yield; and
- Phenotyping Cranberry Populations for Trait Mapping.

More and more, growers are striving to improve their farming practices so they can maintain production while also improving their environmental impact. All of the funds that support this research come from Wisconsin growers. SB 154 would support those cranberry research activities with a one-time boost of state funds of \$500,000. In this stressed cranberry economy, these funds would be a much needed and welcome support for Wisconsin cranberry growers.

Thank you for your consideration and your support for SB 154.