



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION Assembly Bill 101

March 6, 2025

Good morning, members of the Assembly Committee on Education. During this past interim, I again served as the chairperson of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

The State-Tribal Relations committee is a permanent committee created to study issues relating to American Indian tribes and to develop legislative proposals. Membership of the study committee consisted of two Senators, four Representatives, and 11 public members representing the interests of the state's tribes. The study committee met four times from August to December 2024.

The committee discussed numerous topics of importance to the state's tribes. In concluding its work, the committee recommended a number of bill drafts for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council, one of which is before this committee today.

As background, current law requires that the Department of Public Instruction conduct a biennial assessment of the need for American Indian language and culture education programs. Various information must be included in this assessment, including the numbers, ages, location, and tribal affiliation of American Indian children. Though many school districts voluntarily report such information in their required reporting to DPI, current law does not require school districts to collect and report this information.

Assembly Bill 101 requires that school districts include in their annual report to DPI the numbers, ages, and tribal affiliation of American Indian children attending the school district beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

This bill passed out of this committee unanimously last session, and the State-Tribal Relations committee recommended introduction by a unanimous vote again this session.

Steve McCarthy and Abby Gorzlaneyk from Legislative Council are here with me today to help answer any questions. Thank you for considering this bill.



March 6, 2025

Assembly Committee on Education

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2025 Assembly Bill 101**

We thank Chairperson Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 101 (AB 101). We would also like to acknowledge and thank the 2024 Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations for their collaboration with DPI on the development of this bill.

Beginning in the 2021-22 academic school year, school districts began voluntarily reporting Tribal Affiliation data for American Indian/Alaska Native students enrolled in public school districts across Wisconsin. The data enables the department, school districts, and Tribal Nations to improve educational outcomes for American Indian students through targeted development, implementation, and evaluation of effective services and programs. While this voluntary data collection is important, the data is currently limited because not all school districts report the Tribal Affiliation data to DPI. When data is incomplete, it makes adequately serving the unique needs of each Tribal Nation much more difficult.

Tribal Nations have repeatedly requested, through department consultations and memoranda of understanding, that DPI collect Tribal Affiliation data from public school districts. Additionally, Tribal Nations often seek information from DPI to identify and connect individuals with their tribes across the state. The collection of Tribal Affiliation data will ensure that DPI and the Tribal Nations can continue to provide targeted supports to each Nation's students.

As a result, DPI has recommended a statutory change requiring school boards to report Tribal Affiliation data to DPI, as part of its collaboration with the 2022 and 2024 Special Committees on State-Tribal Relations. That recommendation is reflected in this bill.

The collection of Tribal Affiliation data will assist the department in pinpointing where specific individuals who identify with a Tribal Nation (e.g., enrolled, a descendent of, or affiliated with) are located to provide focused information to educators in those school districts. While each of the American Indian Nations located in Wisconsin are unique, it is important to give all schools the ability to provide specific Tribal content, when appropriate, to improve the education outcomes of American Indian students. Similarly, the collection of Tribal Affiliation data can help develop, test, and demonstrate the effectiveness of services for improving education outcomes of American Indian students to determine if there are any significant differences between Tribal Nations.

Thank you for allowing DPI to share this testimony. Please direct any questions to Laura Adams, Policy Initiatives Advisor, at laura.adams@dpi.wi.gov.



Oneida Nation
Oneida Business Committee
PO Box 365 • Oneida, WI 54155-0365
oneida-nsn.gov



To: Representative Kitchens, Chair
Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Lisa Liggins, Oneida Nation Tribal Secretary

Date: March 6, 2025

Re: Support for Assembly Bill 101 Recommended by the Special Committee
on State-Tribal Relations

Good morning, Chairman Kitchens, and members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

My name is Lisa Liggins, and I serve as the Oneida Business Tribal Secretary. Previously, I was a member of the Oneida Nation School Board, and I now act as the liaison to the School Board while also serving on the Oneida Youth Leadership Institute Board. Additionally, I am a member of the State of Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

The Oneida Nation has over 17,000 tribal citizens worldwide, with more than 1,400 students attending public schools in Wisconsin. Like many Tribal Nations in the state, our Nation's jurisdiction overlaps with multiple governmental entities, including two counties, five cities and villages, and six school districts.

I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to Chairman Kitchens for scheduling a public hearing on this bill. I also want to thank Representative Jeff Mursau for chairing the Special Committee, along with the legislators who served on it: Senators Felzkowski and Smith, and Representatives Conley, Edming, and Rozar.

Please note this legislation was introduced last session as 2023 Assembly Bill 212, which passed the Assembly Education Committee unanimously 15-0.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the proposed bill requiring school districts to report information related to Native American students attending school within their districts. This legislation represents a critical step toward improving data collection practices that support educational fairness, and cultural awareness.

Under current law, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction is required to conduct a statewide, biennial assessment of the need for American Indian language and culture education programs. This assessment includes data on the numbers, ages, location, and tribal affiliation of Native American students. However, the law does not explicitly require school districts to collect or report tribal affiliation data to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). While certain school districts began voluntarily reporting this data, the lack of a uniform reporting requirement has led to inconsistencies in data collection.

A good mind. A good heart. A strong fire.

Additionally, state law mandates that school districts submit annual reports to DPI, which include various metrics such as the number of students enrolled, hours of direct instruction, and teacher employment data. The proposed bill expands these reporting requirements to include the numbers, ages, and tribal affiliation of Native American students, ensuring more comprehensive and accurate data collection.

Currently, obtaining precise data on Native American students is difficult due to limitations in school district data collection forms. These forms do not provide a designated space for parents to specify their child's tribal affiliation. As a result, DPI has faced challenges in obtaining comprehensive and accurate demographic data. DPI has reported that approximately two-thirds of Wisconsin school districts voluntarily collect tribal affiliation data, but the absence of a statewide mandate has resulted in inconsistent reporting practices.

Requiring all school districts to uniformly collect and report tribal affiliation data will offer an increase in educational fairness by providing more accurate demographic data, allowing policymakers and educators to assess the educational needs of Native American students and implement programs that support their academic success. School districts with higher populations of Native American students will be better positioned to receive the resources they need.

The proposed legislation is a necessary and meaningful step toward ensuring that native American students are accurately represented in statewide educational data. By making tribal affiliation reporting a requirement for all school districts, this bill will support DPI's ability to improve educational resources for Native American students and promote greater awareness of Native American history and culture in Wisconsin schools.

Accurate counts directly impact curriculum development, ensuring that Native students see their cultures reflected in their education. Research consistently demonstrates that cultural identity serves as a protective factor against negative outcomes and enhances the relevance of instruction for all students.

The Oneida Nation respectfully urges this committee and the Legislature to support this bill. It is with a good mind, a good heart, and strong fire I say yawako for your time and consideration.