



JERRY L. O'CONNOR

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To: The Senate Committee on Colleges and Universities
From: Rep. Jerry L. O'Connor
Re: Assembly Bill 21

Hello, Chair Murphy and members of the committee. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on AB 21.

We propose a simple, win-win solution for childcare challenges, technical college training opportunities, and state taxpayers.

Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC), which has campuses in Fond du Lac, West Bend, Horicon, and Beaver Dam, passed a \$55 million building referendum in 2022. This included \$3 million for a childcare facility that would be supported by its Early Childhood Education and Certification program.

Further analysis has since shown that it would not be close to economically feasible for MPTC to operate a Childcare facility since they would be obligated to provide employee compensation levels offered for state Tech school staff.

MPTC has since negotiated with the local YMCA to lease and operate the childcare center. The YMCA is currently serving 98 childcare seats in Fond du Lac. The new 90+ seat facility would generate a small \$50,000 profit for MPTC, which would net about \$50,000/ year.

This proposal ran into a snag as current statutes prohibit Wisconsin's Tech schools from leasing excess space for non-educational purposes. AB 21 addresses this issue by allowing Tech Schools across the state to lease excess space for childcare services.

Like many communities, Fond du Lac has a shortage of childcare seats. This win-win proposal provides valuable childcare openings for families. MPTC can offer valuable hands-on experience to students in the Early Childhood Education program through the YMCA offering. Finally, the local community is able to marshal local resources to meet local needs without state funding.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



DAN FEYEN

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To: The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: Assembly Bill 21

Hello Chair Murphy and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on AB 21.

This is a very simple, permissive, bill that allows a technical college to lease out space to an outside agency to run a child care center.

The bill was brought to our attention by Moraine Park Technical College, who you will hear more from later, who was seeking to use \$3 million of their approved \$55 million referendum to build out a child care facility to lease to an outside agency. This would save taxpayers from having to foot the bill for running the childcare facility, while also collecting rent payments through the agreement.

Unfortunately, State Statute only allows Technical Colleges to lease land or buildings to others if is not needed for school purposes. Since MPTC would still be using this facility as a clinical site and classrooms for their Early Childhood Education program, they are not allowed to lease or rent the space. Common sense should tell you that if the college is able to get multiple uses out of the same building, that is good for the college, good for the taxpayer, and good for the community.

AB 21 fixes this issue and paves the way for Moraine Park Technical College to move ahead with their plan to have an on-site daycare. This bill also opens the door for other technical colleges to take advantage and partner with outside agencies to open more daycares across the state.

Imagine the educational doors that can be opened by having a technical college with on-site drop-in care for students with children. Or how this might benefit MPTC students who are enrolled in the Early Childhood program.

This common-sense fix will open daycare slots, provide flexibility for technical college students and employees with kids, and provide an incredible learning experience for future early childhood educators all while saving taxpayer dollars.

Thank you very much for holding a public hearing on this bill.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 26

Presented by JJ Raflik, CEO, Fond du Lac Family YMCA

2025 Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

Wisconsin State Legislature

Chairperson, Senator Feyen, Representative O'Connor, distinguished committee members, and co-sponsors of Senate Bill 26, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) for their vision in addressing the critical need for child care in our community, as well as to the child care leadership team and Board of Directors at the Fond du Lac Family YMCA for their commitment to expanding our impact.

I am here today to express the Fond du Lac Family YMCA's strong support for Senate Bill 26, which would allow Colleges and Universities to lease newly built space to organizations for the purpose of operating a child care business. As an organization that has been actively engaged in discussions with MPTC regarding this opportunity, we recognize the immense value this statutory change would provide—not just to our partnership, but to families, students, and employers across Fond du Lac County.

The need for high-quality, accessible child care in our community has reached a crisis level. Private child care centers continue to close at an alarming rate, including a recent closure in Fond du Lac that had over 110 licensed spots. Since 2022, Fond du Lac County has lost more than 360 licensed child care spots, and according to the most recent census data, over 1,100 children in our county are unable to access early child care due to a lack of available openings. This shortage puts significant strain on working families, businesses, and the overall economic stability of our region.

For child care centers to remain financially viable, partnerships have become increasingly necessary. The YMCA partnering with MPTC is a logical solution that would help address this growing need while ensuring the sustainability of child care services in Fond du Lac County. Additionally, this partnership would create valuable learning opportunities for MPTC students enrolled in early childhood education programs, allowing them to gain real-world experience in a high-quality child care setting located directly on campus. Providing hands-on learning for future child care professionals will not only enhance the quality of care but also help address workforce shortages in the industry.

The Fond du Lac Family YMCA has direct experience operating a successful child care center, as we are currently licensed for over 100 children. This includes 82 traditional full-time child care spots, in addition to students enrolled in our 4K program in partnership with the Fond du Lac School District. Our Y's overall operation serves as an essential support system for our child care program, providing critical services such as cleaning, repair and replacement planning, and long-term financial sustainability. This integrated model allows us to effectively manage our child care center while ensuring a high-quality experience for children and families.

Since 2022, the Fond du Lac Family YMCA has made a strategic commitment to addressing the child care need in our community. Through our YMCA's strategic plan, we have actively worked to expand child care access and deepen partnerships to better serve families. We



have engaged in conversations with multiple entities, including the Fond du Lac School District, Fond du Lac County, private child care centers, MPTC, and others; all seeking solutions to keep child care facilities open or expand options in the community. As part of this commitment, we have expanded our partnership with the Fond du Lac School District to add before-care programming at six elementary schools and introduced a 3K option for families needing part-time weekly care. Our ability to respond to these needs demonstrates not only our dedication to child care but also our capacity to collaborate with community partners.

YMCA associations across Wisconsin, including the Kettle Moraine YMCA, Dodge County YMCA, Oshkosh YMCA, and others, have all partnered within their communities to maintain and expand child care access. As part of our planning with MPTC, we have studied these models to ensure that our collaboration is both beneficial to the Y and MPTC while fulfilling this critical community need. By analyzing best practices from these partnerships, we are positioned to implement a sustainable model that not only increases child care capacity but also strengthens workforce development through student engagement and training.

Senate Bill 26 represents a critical step in allowing colleges like MPTC to utilize referendum dollars in a way that directly benefits families, students, and local businesses. By making this simple yet impactful change to the state statute, we can help stabilize and expand child care services at a time when they are needed most.

On behalf of the Fond du Lac Family YMCA, I humbly ask for your support for SB26 and thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions the committee may have.

With Gratitude,

JJ Raflik
CEO/Executive Director
Fond du Lac Family YMCA