



DAVE ARMSTRONG

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 67TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 279 June 10, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify on behalf of Assembly Bill 279.

It is no secret that Wisconsin employers continue to face a worker shortage. Over 146,000 positions are currently vacant, which means our state's economy is not meeting its potential. To make matters worse, the Department of Administration projects that Wisconsin's population will shrink by almost 200,000 by 2050. The projected declines will affect urban and rural counties alike, with only a few expected to grow. Besides shrinking, Wisconsin's population is also aging, which will further reduce the workforce.

Assembly Bill 279 seeks to address these economic and demographic concerns by creating a talent recruitment grant program aimed at attracting households from other states. These grants would support community marketing and outreach efforts, as well as direct incentives. Senator Testin and I are working to fund this program through the state budget.

Under the program, interested local governments, tribes, and certain nonprofits may present proposals to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation for local talent recruitment programs aimed at out-of-state households making at least \$55,000. These proposals must include the local program's estimated costs, household goal and estimated total grant amount per household, estimated state and local tax impact, and estimated total economic impact. In addition, the applicant must contribute at least 20% of the total cost.

Grants for a program to serve a given municipality are capped at \$500,000 for the fiscal year. A community that receives a grant will receive half the money up front, with the other half coming when it meets 50% of its household goal. Grant recipients will be required to make semiannual reports to WEDC about the status and effectiveness of their efforts.

Wisconsin needs to do everything it can to address our workforce shortage and demographic changes, and the talent recruitment grant program can be a valuable tool in this effort. Incoming households will not only help employers fill positions, but they'll buy houses, pay taxes, patronize businesses, attend schools, and contribute to the community – and the state – in many other ways.

Thank you for your consideration.



PATRICK TESTIN STATE SENATOR

DATE: June 10, 2025

RE: **Testimony on 2025 Assembly Bill 279**

TO: The Assembly Committee on Jobs and Economy

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you, Chairman Gundrum and members of the committee, for accepting my written testimony on Assembly Bill 279.

Currently, Wisconsin's economy is not meeting its full potential. The reason for this is the 146,000 vacant positions in Wisconsin businesses. We seem to have more jobs than we have workers to fill them. More distressing, Wisconsin population is projected to drop by nearly 200,000 people by 2050. As the current workforce ages, who is going to replace them? Or help to take care of them? More importantly, what companies are going to want to locate here if they won't be able to attract the skilled workers they need?

Assembly Bill (AB) 279 wants to address these issues by establishing a **talent recruitment grant program** to attract out-of-state households to Wisconsin. The program would be run through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). Interested local governments, tribes and certain non-profits may submit detailed proposals to WEDC for grants to use in attracting households to their communities. The program is aimed at out-of-state households making at least \$55,000. The proposals to WEDC must include the local program's estimated costs, household goal and estimated total grant amount per household, estimated state and local tax impact, and estimated total economic impact. In addition, the applicant must contribute at least 20% of the total cost.

The grants, if received, could be used for administering and marketing the incentives to out-of-state households, as well as incentives themselves. Grants for a program to serve a given municipality are capped at \$500,000 for the fiscal year. A community that receives a grant will receive half the money up front, with the other half coming when it meets 50% of its household goal. Grant recipients will be required to make semiannual reports to WEDC about the status and effectiveness of their efforts.

While AB 279 is expected to help our employers, it will also benefit our state as a whole by bolstering our tax base and economy. After all, these new residents will be paying taxes, buying homes, shopping at local businesses and attending out schools. Studies show that each new household can generate more than \$90,000 in economic activity each year.

We already know Wisconsin is a tremendous place to live and work. If you join me in supporting AB 279, we can help others realize that as well. Thank you for your consideration.