

☞ **09hr_SC-Ed_sb0598_pt01**



Details:

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2009-10

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Gigi Godwin (LRB) (August/2011)

Present: (7) Senators Lehman, Jauch, Erpenbach, Hansen, Olsen, Grothman
and Hopper.

Absent: (0) None.

Moved by Senator Hansen, seconded by Senator Olsen that **Senate Bill 598** be
recommended for passage.

Ayes: (7) Senators Lehman, Jauch, Erpenbach, Hansen, Olsen, Grothman
and Hopper.

Noes: (0) None.

PASSAGE RECOMMENDED, Ayes 7, Noes 0

Sara Dauscher
Committee Clerk



KATHLEEN VINEHOUT

STATE SENATOR

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 598 and Senate Bill 599
Senate Committee on Education
Thursday, March 25, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 598 and SB 599, bills I co-authored with Rep. Clark as part of a package of bills to help our rural schools. These bills give flexibility and tools to schools facing extremely difficult challenges.

I am fortunate to regularly interact with school superintendents and school board members across my district. Our discussions focused on the same old problem; the severe financial difficulties facing each and every school district.

Instead of creating more educational opportunities for our children, my school superintendents and school board members are forced to look at creating ways to do with less.

Our rural schools are making severe cuts to programs, services and staff. Many are faced with eliminating music programs, foreign language courses, vocational education and all extracurricular activities including sports, drama, forensics, FFA and other groups.

A recent survey of school district administrators shows the majority have already taken steps to squeeze as much as they can from their expenses. They reduced energy and health care costs, combined job responsibilities and share staff with other districts. They use cooperative educational services and participate in purchasing cooperatives for supplies.

Unfortunately for some of these schools, consolidation may be their last best option. The bills are not meant to push for consolidation; however for those schools considering that option, SB 598 will give them flexibility as they navigate the process. The bill allows school districts facing consolidation to hold a referendum in conjunction with the April, September or November elections. Currently, if a referendum is required it can only occur in conjunction with the November election.

Senate Bill 599 offers tools to struggling school districts to help find efficiencies or to study the prospect of consolidation. This bill appropriates \$15,000 of unused transportation categorical aid for the efficiency and consolidation feasibility studies.

Many school superintendents and school boards looking at doing more with less have considered how to operate as efficiently as possible.

My own school district of Alma is an example of how to create efficiencies. They share staff and programs such as music, consumer education and psychologist arrangements with Pepin and Plum City school districts. Alma and Pepin combined many sports activities. The school district administrator said this was their secret to survival.

Giving school districts resources to study measures to improve their efficiency could help them survive during these very difficult fiscal times.

And for school districts facing the difficult decision of whether or not to consolidate, the grant funds can help them develop an effective plan to move through a very complex process.

Good schools prepare our children for productive lives. Good schools make vibrant communities. Good schools support a healthy economy. We need to finish the work of reforming our school funding system. In the meantime, we can provide some assistance by passing SB 598 and SB 599.