



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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**Senator Alberta Darling and Representative Mary Felzkowski Testimony**  
The Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, and Children and Families  
Senate Bill 166  
Tuesday, August 27, 2019

Thank you Chair Kooyenga and committee members for taking the time to hear Senate Bill 166. This bill is crucial to ensuring high quality care at our state's free and charitable clinics.

In Wisconsin, there are over 100 free and charitable clinics who serve over 150,000 Wisconsinites every year. In both rural and urban areas, our free and charitable clinics are a crucial safety net for uninsured and underinsured residents of our state.

Currently, health care professionals are eligible for loan assistance if they serve in rural or "eligible practice areas." Eligible practice areas include those with a primary care or mental health shortage as defined by federal law or American Indian reservations.

Senate Bill 166 amends this definition of 'eligible practice area' to include free and charitable clinics. This simple change will enable health professionals like physicians and dentists who serve in free and charitable clinics the same opportunity for loan assistance as those serving in rural and underserved areas.

This bill is crucial to expanding access to health care for Wisconsinites. By incentivizing practice in free and charitable clinics, more professionals will opt to serve in this essential safety net in our healthcare system. Senate Bill 166 expands access to quality healthcare and aids qualified health care professionals with student debt.

Thank you committee members for taking the time to hear Senate Bill 166. We hope we can count on your support for this important initiative.



**SB-166 HPLAP Testimony – Skrajewski**  
**WI Senate – Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families**  
**Tuesday, August 27, 2019**

Chairman Kooyenga and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 166. My name is Dennis Skrajewski and I'm the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics. Our small, non-profit organization exists to support, strengthen, and advocate for Wisconsin's free and charitable clinics (FCCs) and the patients and communities they serve. There are ~ 100 free and charitable clinics throughout Wisconsin who provide medical, dental and behavioral health care to over 135,000 Wisconsinites annually. Please note that free and charitable clinics are NOT Federally Qualified Health Centers. We don't survive through governmental funding nor insurance billings. Free and charitable clinics thrive through community support, foundation grants and copious volunteers who give so generously of their time.

SB-166 would allow critical healthcare providers (Physicians, PAs, NPs, Dentists and Dental Hygienists) who agree to work at least 32 clinic hours per week for 3 years to participate in Wisconsin's educational loan assistance program administered by the Board of Regents. Through this program up to \$50,000 in educational loans can be repaid for Physicians and Dentists and up to \$25,00 for the other providers.

Honestly, the majority of free and charitable clinics in Wisconsin are too small to benefit from this legislation. They simply lack the resources to employ providers and rely totally on a volunteer staff. However, those larger, more established clinics (typically more urban in location) will find the ability to have their providers participate in this educational loan assistance program an exceptional recruitment incentive and benefit.

Even in larger free and charitable clinics, their resources are challenged, provider compensation is on the low side and benefits are spartan. The fact that providers serving these clinics can qualify for educational relief through this program could make the difference in their ability to hire critical providers and improve access to healthcare for at least some of Wisconsin's uninsured and underinsured.

For this reason, the Wisconsin Association of Free & Charitable Clinics strongly encourages your support and the ultimate passage of SB-166. Thank you Sen. Darling, Rep. Felzkowski and associated co-sponsors for your support. Thank you Chairman Kooyenga and Committee Members for your time and attention.

Respectfully submitted,

*Dennis Skrajewski*

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