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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**

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

Absent: (0) None.

Moved by Senator Hansen, seconded by Senator Olsen that **Senate Substitute Amendment 1** be recommended for adoption.

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

Noes: (0) None.

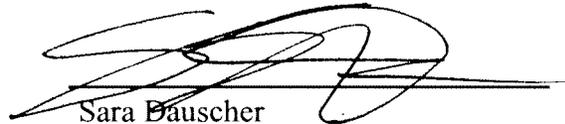
ADOPTION OF SENATE SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT 1
RECOMMENDED, Ayes 7, Noes 0

Moved by Senator Hansen, seconded by Senator Olsen that **Senate Bill 599** be recommended for passage as amended.

Ayes: (5) Senators Lehman, Jauch, Erpenbach, Hansen
and Olsen.

Noes: (2) Senators Grothman and Hopper.

PASSAGE AS AMENDED RECOMMENDED, Ayes 5, Noes 2



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.

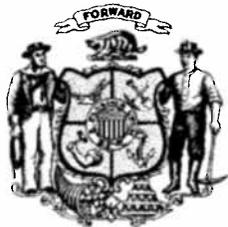
Giving school districts resources to study measures to improve their efficiency could help them survive during these very difficult fiscal times.

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.



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





FRED CLARK

Serving Adams, Columbia, Marquette & Sauk Counties

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ♦ 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Public Hearing

Senate Committee on Education

Thursday, March 24, 2010

10:00 am, Rm. 411 South

Testimony – SB 599 Efficiency and Consolidation Feasibility Studies Grants

Thank you Chairman Lehman and members of the committee. I testify today in favor of SB 599, relating to efficiency and feasibility study grants for school districts undergoing consolidations.

None of us wants to see schools consolidated, however the current fiscal environment for schools today makes it clear that schools are facing financial crises that will result in more consolidations in the years to come. By restoring funding for the school consolidation feasibility study grant program, this legislation helps provide tools for school districts so they can most effectively plan for the many details associated with consolidation.

Districts undergoing consolidation are faced with a myriad of information, decisions, and strong differences of opinion within their communities. Working through these complex variables without assistance can be challenging for a volunteer school board. School districts need the equivalent of a business plan to effectively prepare for consolidation. Especially for small schools, these plans are often prepared by third parties.

In the 2007-2009 biennium, DPI awarded 11 grants totaling \$110,000 to fund consolidation feasibility studies for pairs or trios of school districts seeking consolidation. SB 599 provides \$50,000 for a one-time allocation to fund that program using the existing guidance.

I want to be clear, it is not our intent to point all arrows at consolidation as the only relief available to struggling schools. So, in addition to consolidation studies, this legislation adds funding for a new component designed to assist schools that want to study measures for improving efficiency. School district efficiency feasibility studies will help provide tools to districts who wish to reduce costs and improve their financial viability by combining operations, without sacrificing educational outcomes.

The bill appropriates \$150,000 for both consolidation feasibility and efficiency studies. Efficiency studies would be subject to a 20% district match. The appropriation will come from unused funds within the transportation categorical aid. Grants are for up to \$10,000 per school district.

Again, it is our hope with this legislation to provide a few new tools for schools while they face unique challenges. I ask for your support for this legislation.