



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 569

February 12, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 569.

This bill was brought to us by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The bill would allow any public or private entity that is permitted to offer courses in driver education or training to also provide skills test (or road test) certifications. Under the bill, if a student enrolled in driver education with one of these public or private entities also receives a skills test certification, the DOT would have the ability to waive the road test currently required at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This waiver would only apply to students applying for a "Class D" operator's license and to those who take drivers education and behind-the-wheel from a licensed instructor. Parents would still have the opportunity to have their child take skills test through a DMV service center if that is their preference.

Allowing public or private entities to participate in the skills test portion of driver's education has many benefits. First and foremost, this bill is pro-business, pro-consumer and pro-customer. Allowing the waiver provides increased convenience to customers who would be able to avoid a trip to the often busy DMV service center. The bill also provides small businesses, specifically driver training schools, the opportunity to expand the scope of their business and the range of services provided to the public.

This bill also has the added benefit of cost savings for the DOT. Currently, more than 80% of students in driver education and training pass their first exam, with 96% passing on the first or second attempt. Waiving the skills test for drivers certified by a driver training school will allow DMV the ability to focus staff positions on areas more critical to safety.

This bill is a move in the right direction to make sure we are spending taxpayer dollars wisely, promoting public safety, ensuring consumer convenience, and helping small businesses.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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DATE: February 12, 2014

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

The Honorable Jerry Petrowski, Chair

FROM: Tom Rhatican, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 569 (driving skills tests for certain noncommercial drivers)

Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of Wisconsin Senate Bill 569 (SB 569). SB 569 relates to driving skills tests for certain noncommercial motor vehicle drivers.

SB 569 allows any public or private entity that is permitted to offer courses in "Class D" driver education or training to provide skills test (road test) certification for their students. "Class D" driver licenses are required for anyone who operates a car or light truck on public roadways. Specifically, the bill provides that if the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) receives from a driver training school a certification of eligibility for exemption relating to a student, WisDOT may waive the skills test for that student when the student applies for a Class D driver's license.

Current law provides certain skills test requirements that must be met by a prospective student when driving skills are examined, and are specified in Chapter Trans 104.06 (6) and (9) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. SB 569 maintains these requirements.

The proposal is pro-business, pro-consumer and pro-customer. This bill will result in cost savings for the Department, and will allow DMV the ability to focus more staff resources on areas critical to safety. In addition, the bill will provide increased convenience to customers by enabling the customer to avoid having to travel to a DMV service center; resulting in a decreased number of customer visits to the DMV. The driver education community has excelled at preparing their students to drive safely and to pass the skills test currently administered by WisDOT's Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This success is most evident with currently more than 80% of students in driver

education and training passing their first exam, and with 96% passing on the first or second attempt.

Only driver training schools that have been certified by the Department and that are interested in providing skills test certifications will be able to authorize skills test waivers. If a driver training school does not find a student eligible for the waiver, the student will be required to take and pass a skills test administered by DMV prior to licensure. Additionally, parents can request that their child be required to test with DMV, if desired. Persons that do not take driver's education are not eligible for a waiver, and must test with DMV.

Knowing the length of time that driver training instructors spend with their students (six hours) and the consistency with which these students pass their DMV skills test, as mentioned above, the Department is confident in driver training instructors being able to appropriately determine driver proficiency. Please note that the Wisconsin Driver Training and Safety Education Association (WDTSEA) has registered in support of SB 569. WDTSEA appreciates that these driver skills test certifications are voluntary and that this provides an opportunity for interested entities to expand the scope of their business and range of services provided to the public.

Wisconsin will not be the first state to allow DMV skills test waivers for persons successfully completing driver training and demonstrating competence to their driver training instructor. Both Iowa and Illinois have similar programs in place, and both have not experienced any negative impact on driver preparedness, motorist safety or motor vehicle accident rates. Furthermore, DMV staff has held many discussions on this topic with entities having expertise in this area; including: representatives in other states, the driver training coordinator at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the driver training expert at the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA), a driver training instructor at a Wisconsin Technical College, and representatives at the parent organization of WDTSEA, the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA). At the conclusion of these discussions, it was recommended that Wisconsin allow entities permitted to offer courses in "Class D" driver education or training to provide skills test certification for their students.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Nate Yahn, WisDOT legislative advisor, at (608) 266-1114.