



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

Assembly Bill 559

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Thank you Chairman Murphy and committee members for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 559. This bill will allow students who have mastered subject material in high school to test out of taking what would essentially amount to the same class their first year in college.

Many high school seniors today have the opportunity take advanced classes or college-level classes either at their school or at a nearby tech school or college or university. There is no concrete process in place for the transfer of the credits they earn doing this. This bill will direct the Board of Regents to establish policies for those credits and *if* the credits are not transferable, allow the student to take an examination to determine their competency in the material.

The language in this bill was a part of the governor's proposed budget and was removed by the Joint Finance Committee as it was a non-fiscal policy item. This bill does not change the standards that the UW System has for awarding credits. What this bill does is ensure that a student who has shown the required level of understanding in a course actually receives the appropriate credit without having to take the course again in college, thus saving them the two most important resources a college student has, time and money.

As lawmakers, it is our responsibility to make sure that we set up our state's children for success and this bill is a simple tool to make their road to success just a little bit smoother. This is a no-cost piece of legislation that would help alleviate some of the potential debt that the average Wisconsin college student might accrue by allowing them to receive credit for any college-level course that they took during high school. Studies clearly show that students who have taken AP and college-level classes while in high school have an easier transition to college and are more successful in their college coursework. If we want our students to stay motivated in the Wisconsin school system and take college-level classes, we need to show them that there will be a tangible benefit once they reach college.

This is a common sense bill that is in keeping with the state's efforts to keep the path of continuing education affordable for our youth. I do want to note that its Senate companion, SB 407, passed out of committee unanimously and the bill has passed the Senate.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony and I'll be happy to take any questions.



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To: The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: ~~Senate Bill 407~~
AB 559

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

This legislation was originally part of the Governor's budget. It was removed by the Joint Finance Committee when all non-fiscal policy was removed from the budget. My office then took an interest in the policy and decided to author it as separate legislation.

Everyone wants to talk about college debt. I prefer to talk about college affordability. The UW System tuition freeze has made significant strides towards keeping the cost of college low in Wisconsin. However, I think we should be continuously looking at all avenues possible to reduce the amount of money students have to pay for an undergraduate degree. Lower costs = lower debt!

I see this legislation as a method of keeping college affordable. Encouraging students to take college-level classes in high school, whether through a dual enrollment program, distance learning, or another method is meaningless if we don't ensure the UW System is providing students credit for those classes when they enter into a two-year or four-year institution.

However, I understand concerns about maintaining rigor. I agree that UW Schools should have the ability to keep their standards high and not be forced to accept any credit earned as equivalent to a UW System credit. I believe the test for competency provision in this bill provides an outlet to accomplish both goals: maintain the value and rigor of a UW System degree while also ensuring students are earning credit if they possess a solid understanding of the material they studied.

This legislation has no fiscal effect. It is simply a common-sense policy to keep college costs low by allowing students at UW System schools to get credit where credit is due. If you have mastered the material, you deserve the credit. A uniform policy stating so would provide certainty for high school students across the state that their investments in higher education in high school are worthy of the additional time and money they require.

Thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions you may have.

Hi everyone, my name is Jenna Seiler and this past June I graduated as salutatorian from Sturgeon Bay High School in Door County, Wisconsin. I am now attending school just down the street at the University of Wisconsin Madison. I'm here to talk to you all today because the advanced placement credits I transferred from high school have drastically influenced my status at UW Madison- and the status of my bank account.

In my senior year of high school I took 4 AP classes and this past May completed all 4 AP tests. Through these tests I was able to transfer 19 AP credits to Madison. Since my high school supported the AP program and offered these course, or paid for any AP taken online, I received instruction free of charge. The other miscellaneous costs I included below,

90 dollars per test (4) + 50 dollars on review books (?) = \$410/(3 + 3 + 9 + 4 = 19 credits) = \$21 per credit

19 credits at UW Madison (instate) - \$5611.52/19 = \$295 dollars per credit

Through the AP process I saved just over \$5,200.

With all other credits considered (college credit in high school, 20 credits) I entered my first semester of college with second semester sophomore standing (39 credits) and will enter (considering my credits currently in process) my second semester of college with junior standing (54 credits).

12- 18 credits UW Madison for an instate student is 5266.80/15 credits this semester I will pay \$351 dollars per credit. If I decided to graduate early, and remained at the 12-18 credit mark, I would save over \$21,000 in just tuition alone (assuming 4 remaining semesters).

Obviously, there are a lot more of benefits to gathering credits in high school and there are a ton of financial benefits for leaving college early. I, however, have decided to use my "borrowed time" to further the education Wisconsin can provide me with through study abroad programs, most likely the political science department's program in England, which includes an internship opportunity in Parliament, and acquiring a double major in both Political Science and Psychology. I feel very lucky to have had all my high school credits to Madison as it has enabled me to avoid many entry level course, obtain an early enrollment period, and save money. AB 559 will grant students across Wisconsin these same opportunities and for that I firmly support it. Thank you for this opportunity and for your time.

Nora Scheer
Testimony for Bill 559
12/12/17

Good Afternoon.

Dear Chairman Murphy:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to your committee today in support of AB 559.

There are two sayings which I consider to be severely relevant to the passing of this bill: "Time is money." and "Knowledge is power." Allow me to introduce myself:

My name is Nora Scheer, and I am a freshman here at UW-Madison pursuing a degree in biomedical engineering. Among the stress of finals week and completing my semester projects, I have chosen to speak here today because I believe this is topic may prove to be immensely advantageous for our UW schools.

Having just graduated from high school this past June, I can speak to the weight of AP week, the week when high school students accumulate as much coffee as they can find and as little sleep as possible to prepare for the tests that may or may not transfer to their perspective college or university. Although I was lucky enough for all my AP credits to transfer, some of my friends were not as fortunate. They scored highly on a test for a class which they would be forced to retake in only a few months in their first semester of college.

From my position, as a student who has seen the benefits of AP credits, I believe that this situation actually places my friends at a disadvantage to other students at their universities who took courses with AP credits that were transferable. My experience has shown me that AP credits allow students to get a leg up on their academic track. For instance, my Advanced Placement Calculus BC credits alone have saved me a lot of time and money on my track as an engineer. Many of those who are on my same path tested poorly on their one shot at the AP test or their honors course did not grant them the credited they needed. These students will not be in my current Calculus course until their junior year of college, while I am able to use the time I have saved to take other courses that will prove to be beneficial to my time and overall learning at the university. I speak for all high school seniors when I say that when we go to college, our main goal is to get our money's worth and to learn as much as we can before graduation day closes in.

Nora Scheer
Testimony for Bill 559
12/12/17

Retaking courses which we have already mastered wastes time, money, and even throws off the curves for exam scores, hurting students who are learning the material for their first time.

Aside from the most visible benefits I have seen from my AP credits, I have also come to find advantages in the fact that my amount of transferred credits has placed me at a higher standing in my UW-Madison freshman class. When it comes to selecting new courses to take at the end of each semester, I have been able to enroll in my required classes earlier than others with less transferred credits. This has allowed me to avoid being waitlisted for classes and to receive the higher-rated professors for my enrolled courses, thus improving my chances for success in future classes.

It is for these reasons that I believe Bill 559 will prove to be in the best interests of students. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I hope you are able to take my words into consideration for the passing of this legislation, as well that you keep in mind: "Time is money" and "knowledge is power."

Thank you.