



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

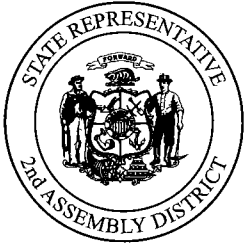
DATE: January 31st, 2018
RE: **Testimony on Senate Bill 682**
TO: The Senate Com. on Workforce Development, Military Affairs, and Senior Issues
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Members of the committee, thank you for today's hearing and for listening to my testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 682 (SB 682), which allocates \$50,000 annually for the creation of a grant program under which the Technical College System Board may award technical college students up to \$1,000 to help address the cost of materials and expenses that accompany an apprenticeship training program. This bill expands the successful Tools of the Trade program to include public funds. Currently, the program dispenses \$200,000 every year and is funded by the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation.

Earlier this month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that Wisconsin's December unemployment rate dropped to 3.0% and is tied for a historic low. Over the last seven years, our state has gone from having an unemployment problem to facing a workforce challenge. Wisconsin needs more workers, and statistics show that apprenticeship programs pave the way for family supporting jobs. The median salary for students who complete an apprenticeship is over \$67,000. As students realize these opportunities, the number of apprentices taking advantage of the Tools of the Trade program has increased. In 2017, 317 students applied, 272 met eligibility standards, and 200 grants were awarded. By passing this bill, we will be able to help 50 more students annually pursue a path that ends in a high paying job for them and a need met for our employers. It's also worth noting that the current program uses financial need as a criteria for determining eligibility for a grant. Under this bill, financial need would be a criteria for the distribution of the public funding as well.

In its current iteration, the Tools of Trade program has helped give hundreds of students the materials they need to be successful. Approximately 96% of students who utilized the program have gone on to complete their apprenticeships or continue their training in the following semester.

Please join me in supporting this legislation, as it builds on a model that has a proven track record of success for growing our state's workforce.



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TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Workforce Development, Military Affairs & Senior Issues

FROM: Rep. André Jacque

DATE: January 31, 2018

RE: Senate Bill 682

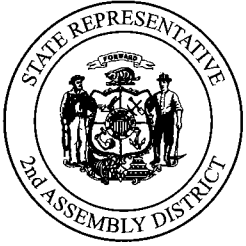
Chairman Testin and members of the Senate Committee on Workforce Development, Military Affairs & Senior Issues,

Thank you for the opportunity to join Sen. Testin to testify before you today as the authors of Senate Bill 682. Wisconsin employers desperately need skilled workers in the trades and apprenticeships have been successful in helping meet that demand, but the road to complete them is long and paved with financial challenges that can discourage even the most motivated individuals.

In response to this need, Sen. Testin and I have introduced this bi-partisan legislation to expand the Tools of the Trade apprenticeship grant program by providing the Wisconsin Technical College System Board with an additional \$50,000 per academic year to assist technical college students who have undertaken apprenticeship training courses in conjunction with instruction at their schools. Each individual student who qualifies is eligible to receive up to \$1,000, which must be used to assist in paying for materials and expenses associated with the apprenticeship training program, including tools, clothing, equipment and supplies. The Technical College System Board is required to establish an application process and criteria for awarding these grants. The existing Tools of the Trade program is privately funded for the system by the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation and dispenses \$200,000 annually in grants.

Since the Tools of the Trade program was established in 2013, approximately 96 percent of past recipients have either completed their apprenticeships or continued their training the following semester. Completion is critical, as the most recent data available showed the median salary for students completing an apprenticeship to be over \$67,000. Nearly \$600,000 in Tools of the Trade scholarships have been awarded to apprentices in Wisconsin since the program was expanded to apprentices at all WTCS colleges four years ago.

Senate Bill 682 will help WTCS keep pace with the growing demand system-wide for assistance to apprentices. Last year, the Tools of the Trade program received approximately 265 applications, with 225 deemed eligible and 200 funded. This year, 317 applications for Tools of the Trade funding were received, with 272 of them being considered eligible (an over 20% increase), though still only 200 will be funded.



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Encouraging apprenticeships and expanding youth apprenticeship programs has been a legislative focus of mine during my time in the legislature, and I was delighted to work closely with the Wisconsin Technical College System in bringing forward this proposal with their enthusiastic support. Senate Bill 682 has support from the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association, Mechanical Contractors Association of Wisconsin, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association of Milwaukee and Southeastern Wisconsin, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' Association of Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Pipe Trades Association.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 682.