



Wisconsin State Senate
Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Chair
Testimony of Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, Inc.
Senate Bill 86

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

On behalf of our 850 members, Associated Builders & Contractors of Wisconsin thinks that this bill is an opportunity to help young adults find the right path in life sooner.

As I'm sure you have heard, the construction industry is facing a skilled worker shortage. Currently, the average age of someone working in construction is between 48 and 52 years old. Unless roads, buildings, indoor plumbing, electricity, and heat are going away anytime soon, we are going to have to find ways to fill these careers.

In my position at ABC, I hear every day from construction contractors the issues that they are facing trying to recruit the next generation of skilled professionals. There is no perfect solution. I spend countless hours visiting high schools talking to teenagers about the amazing careers in construction, and in some ways, we are making positive changes in the image surrounding a "construction worker".

The fact is though, most high school students will not choose construction or the adult apprenticeship program. The average age of our nearly 1200 apprentices is not the expected 18 or 19 years old. The average age of our apprentices is 27 years old.

When we look at college entrance rates – and more alarming – college dropout rates – there is frustration among my members. Most high school students have been told from kindergarten that a four-year education is their only path to success, and yet, once many get to college they are either overwhelmed or find they that this is not where they are meant to be. In fact, in a report produced by the University of Wisconsin System, after 6 years only 60% of their students graduated from the institution that they were originally enrolled in.

Our association believes in education and training. In fact, nationally ABC company members invested over \$30 Million in training in 2013 alone. Education can come in many forms though—particularly the adult registered apprenticeship program which is a DWD overseen program. Apprenticeship is a training program that combines on the job training along with classroom education.

We understand that not every individual is meant to be in construction. It takes unique individuals who have the right combination of head skills, mechanical skills, and teamwork to be successful in the construction industry. But, time and time again we are seeing that these great candidates for construction are pushed toward four-year education.



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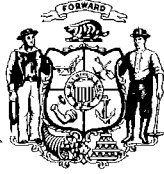
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This bill will allow ABC and other apprenticeship trainers to reach out to the students who unfortunately realized a little late that four-year education wasn't where they were supposed to be. It gives them options and opportunities when they are perhaps feeling lost. It allows them to see career paths, job opportunities, and training that they can receive while getting paid.

Someday, I hope that this form of marketing is not needed. I want high school seniors to make the right decisions for their lives the first time around.

I will continue to do my outreach and work with the high schools, but in the meantime, I'm hoping that we can work together to help young adults find these in demand, good paying, and fulfilling training opportunities and careers.

*For more information contact:
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DEVIN LEMAHIEU

STATE SENATOR

DATE: April 12, 2017
RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 86 (Second Start)
TO: Chair Harsdorf & Members, Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
FROM: Senator Devin LeMahieu

Thank you for hearing my testimony today on Senate Bill 86, also known as the Second Start Act. This legislation will allow the Department of Workforce Development to share apprenticeship and skilled trades opportunities with former students of the University of Wisconsin System.

A traditional four-year college is not for everyone. There are many fields that require good, skilled workers but do not necessarily require an undergraduate degree. As we continue to seek ways to address the skills gap, we need to be creative in how we connect job seekers to available opportunities.

This bill directs the UW System to furnish a list of former students that did not attain a degree to the Department of Workforce Development. Apprenticeship programs will solicit DWD to be included in a packet that will be mailed to the individuals. DWD will then compile and mail the packet. To defray costs, the legislation allows DWD to bill the apprenticeship organizations a proportionate cost of the mailing.

Prior to introduction of this proposal, Representative Krug and I worked extensively with the UW System, which is not opposed to the bill. In addition, we have worked to ensure that student privacy is protected.

Unfortunately, I cannot take credit for this idea. This legislation is based on a bill authored last session by Representative Scott Krug and the late Senator Rick Gudex. However, Representative Krug and I added a four-year sunset to the bill. This will let the Legislature reevaluate the program after four years and allow the program to expire if it is not proven effective. We also added nursing as an eligible occupation to recruit former students.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.