



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions

FROM: State Representative Nancy VanderMeer

DATE: February 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 564

Thank you Chairman Marklein and members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions for holding a hearing on SB 564 today. Cranberries are Wisconsin's largest fruit crop and Wisconsin leads the nation in cranberry production. There are about 240 growers in Wisconsin who farm about 21,000 acres of cranberries across 20 counties. Wisconsin growers grow over 65% of the U.S. cranberry crop. A recent economic analysis showed that cranberry growing has a \$1 billion impact on our state's economy and provides over 3,200 Wisconsin jobs.

As the dairy state, when we in the legislature think about farming, we inherently think about dairy; milk, cheese, and the like. That's understandable. But there are a number of farmers and producers that are absolutely vital to our \$104 billion agriculture economy that do not work in dairy, and that includes cranberry producers.

Cranberry grower's success is a direct result of a strong infrastructure and support system for growing, processing and moving cranberries to market. A significant piece of that infrastructure is a strong partnership with Wisconsin researchers. Growers are fortunate to have a group of young, enthusiastic and innovative research and extension faculty working with them to address production problems, discover solutions and new technologies and then transferring this information to growers to allow them to grow a crop in a sustainable manner. Through their marketing order, individual growers and other industry sources, Wisconsin growers provide in excess of \$500,000 in support to research and extension programs each year. These projects look at issues ranging from variety improvement, plant nutrition, water conservation, water quality, insect, disease and weed management, development of sustainable growing practices as well as new technologies to monitor crop progress throughout the growing season.

The Wisconsin cranberry industry has made its own investment in research by purchasing a 133-acre cranberry farm located in Jackson County to be used as a dedicated cranberry research farm. This cranberry research station will provide a source of sound science for Wisconsin growers, but funding is needed for cranberry research projects and graduate students in order to develop sound, credible science upon which farming practices can be improved. Passage of this legislation would fund research to develop this science that has a direct, positive impact for producers in the field.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be here today and the opportunity for a public hearing on this legislation.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: February 6, 2020

RE: **Testimony on Senate Bill 564**

TO: The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue, and Financial Institutions

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you Chairman Marklein and members of the committee for hearing my testimony on Senate Bill 564.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to help harvest cranberries at Dempze Cranberry Co. in Biron, where I experienced first-hand the work that goes into this important Wisconsin industry. The owners, Rocky and Jamie Biegel, and their employees work long hours to gather the ripe berries that will one day become cranberry sauce, juice, or sweet and dried cranberries. I learned that working in the flooded bogs is tiring, but rewarding work – although I didn't expect to be joined in the water by the dozens of brown spiders that are apparently common to the veteran harvesters with whom I was working. That took a little getting used to!

Last year marked the 25th consecutive year that Wisconsin has led the nation in cranberry production – and our growers are gearing up for number 26.

Sixty percent of the nation's cranberries come from only twenty Wisconsin counties. I'm proud to represent five of the top ten cranberry producing counties – including the top three, Wood, Jackson, and Monroe.

Cranberries have a nearly \$1 billion economic impact on Wisconsin, and the cranberry industry is responsible for approximately 4,000 jobs. Many of those jobs are in processing, which I've also had a chance to experience first-hand. According to data from the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, only five percent of the state's crop is sold as fresh berries – which means that the vast majority of our cranberries are sold in other forms like juice, sauce, or sweet and dried.

As part of my "On the Job" I worked one day each at Badger State Fruit Processing in Pittsville and at Mariani Packing in Wisconsin Rapids. In addition, I've toured Nutrativa Global in Nekoosa. Each of these companies, along with others in the region, has come up with ways to harness the healthy benefits of cranberries into something special from Wisconsin – food products that are enjoyed worldwide.

Wisconsin excels in providing the world with cranberries, but while supply is high, prices have been low. Senate Bill 564 directs \$500,000 to the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, which they in turn will provide to the Wisconsin Cranberry Marketing Board. These funds will be used to grow the sale of cranberries through the development of new products, new markets, and educational programs to aid producers and processors.

By making this investment now, we are taking a crucial step toward ensuring that Wisconsin will continue to be the leader in cranberry production for years to come. We are investing in the thousands of men and women in Central and Northern Wisconsin who take pride in producing an excellent crop that helps feed the world. Please join me in supporting this investment.



February 6, 2020

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions

From: Tom Lochner, Executive Director, WSCGA

Re: **Support SB 564, Cranberry Marketing Board Grant**

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA), I am here today to ask that you **support for SB 564, which would provide \$500,000 to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for the purpose of providing a grant to the cranberry marketing board.**

WSCGA was formed in 1887 to represent Wisconsin's cranberry growers. We represent about 85% of the annual production in the state. Cranberries are the state's largest fruit crop and Wisconsin annually grows in excess of 60% of the US Crop. The most recent estimates are that cranberry growing contributes over \$1 billion to the state's economy and provides over 4,000 jobs for state residents.

The Wisconsin Cranberry Board is a marketing board created under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 96 and ATCP 142. The Board consists of seven (7) growers who collect, manage and administer marketing funds collected in the form of a check-off from Wisconsin state cranberry growers.

The primary objective of the marketing order is to maintain and expand the sales of cranberries. This includes the development of new products and new markets; improving methods and practices related to producing, processing, or marketing of cranberries; and providing educational programs for producers, handlers, or consumers. See ATCP 142.02(1). Funds collected under this order may be used by the marketing board to meet one or more of the objectives described in the order including research and promotion.

The Wisconsin Cranberry Board funds numerous agricultural research programs including:

- Research on Cranberry Bud Cold Hardiness (freezing stress)
- Research on Cranberry Pest Management (reducing applications, factors influencing disease, etc.)
- Research on Cranberry Nutrient Management
- Research on Water conservation and use in cranberries
- Microwave Sensing Technology to Estimate Cranberry Crop Yield
- Phenotyping Cranberry Populations for Trait Mapping

The Board also funds educational programs and promotional activities ranging from providing growers with accurate weather forecasts to supporting the Cranberry Discovery Center and conducting the *Made with Wisconsin Cranberries* campaign. All of the funds that support this research and promotion come from Wisconsin growers. SB 564 would support those cranberry research and promotion activities with a one-time boost of state funds of \$500,000. In this stressed cranberry economy, these funds would be a much needed and welcome support for Wisconsin cranberry growers.

We ask you to support SB 564 and pass it during this session of the Legislature.