



BARBARA DITTRICH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 4, 2021

Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

RE: Rep. Dittrich Testimony on AB 89 – relating to return to in-person work for state employees.

Good afternoon, Committee Chairman Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 89. I also want to thank Representative Rozar and Senator Stroebel for bringing this bill forward.

Throughout this pandemic a majority of Wisconsin citizens, both public and private employees, have been at their jobs doing everything from bagging groceries to saving lives. Wisconsinites all around our state have stepped up and performed their duties, many of them being deemed as “essential workers.”

The focus this bill are employees of the executive branch, paid at taxpayer expense. We should expect no less from our state employees than we do from our private employees. AB 89 speaks to the heart of that premise. It requires the governor to submit a plan to the legislature giving a timeframe for all state employees to whose job functions are performed in their offices, as expected before the beginning of the pandemic, to return to their offices to continue their duties.

I encourage Governor Evers to include safeguards in his plan, allowing for the safe return of state staff. The inspiration for these safeguards could be taken from the measures taken by essential workers throughout this pandemic.

Collaboration and governance are most effective when everyone is in the same room, discussing issues, ideas, and plans. At a time when government needs to collaborate in order to address the issues facing our state, our state’s public servants should be exhibiting every due diligence required of them on behalf of the people of our state.

To that end, I appreciate being able to testify in front of this committee, working on behalf of the individuals in my district and our state. With that, I welcome any questions this committee might have regarding this bill.



DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20TH DISTRICT

Testimony on AB 89

March 4, 2021

Good afternoon members of the committee. I am here to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 89, which would require Governor Evers to develop and distribute a plan for the return of formerly in-person state employees to in-person work. Senate Amendment 1 replaces the due date of this report from the date certain of February 28, 2021 to 21 days after publication. We are in the process of introducing the same amendment for AB 89. The Senate companion to AB 89 (SB 38) passed the Senate as amended last month.

COVID-19 has disrupted most facets of life for Wisconsinites. While the specific individuals and groups have changed, from the beginning almost a year ago, our policies have acknowledged that essential services must be delivered to Wisconsinites. An orderly return to in-person work for state employees is important for several reasons: 1) it will likely lead to increased productivity, 2) it is prudent to make these plans for budget planning purposes, and 3) it sends a message to Wisconsinites that their government will be returning to work as they also begin to return to their own workplaces.

The plan is not binding on the Governor and he retains all his powers regarding agency employment decisions. Also, AB 89 is limited to those employees who were performing their tasks at their places of employment last year. Thank you for considering this measure.



DONNA M. ROZAR

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March 4, 2021

Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

RE: Representative Rozar Testimony on AB 89 – relating to return to in-person work for state employees.

Good afternoon Committee Chairman Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 89.

It is with my experience as a Registered Nurse, and interest in mental health that I would like to submit the following information for your consideration. During the pandemic, The Martec Group, a global market research firm that is headquartered in Detroit, Michigan conducted a survey of 1,214 individuals to explore the impact working from home has had. This study raises some alarming concerns regarding mental health, job satisfaction, motivation and production. Only 19 percent of employees said working from home caused their production to increase, while 40 percent stated their production had declined. Additionally, job satisfaction and motivation had a 25 and 20 percent decline respectively. Perhaps the most alarming finding of this study was the share of employees who considered themselves to have good mental health was more than cut in half, from 62 percent to 28 percent.

The Professor of Sociology at Utrecht University, Tanja van der Lippe, along with Zoltan Lippenyi conducted a large scale survey that was published to the Wiley Online Library in 2019. This survey involved 9 European countries, 259 establishments, 869 teams, and 11,011 employees to show the impact of working from home by co-workers. This study found that working together is problematic when employees cannot exchange critical information because co-workers are not immediately available. This requires more effort on the part of the individual to make use of their skills and knowledge. In conclusion, digital presence cannot compensate for corporeal presence when viewed from the co-work perspective and it is important that state employees return to in-person work to better serve the State of Wisconsin.



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