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10/23/2023

Representative Petryk and members of the Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities, thank you for the opportunity to speak on AB549.

When you drive into Wisconsin on the I-90, you are greeted with a welcome sign. On the beams supporting the monument are the three central tenants of Wisconsin's economy: Recreation, agriculture, and industry.

Manufacturing contributes almost 20% to Wisconsin's GDP. It would be a mistake to underestimate its importance. The National Association of Manufacturers reports at the end of 2021, there were almost half a million manufacturing jobs across the state; these are good Jobs with average annual compensation approaching \$80,000. Unfortunately, the Manufacturing workforce is aging, with over 25% of the workforce over the age of 55 and retiring within the next 10 years. It is essential we plan to replace these skilled individuals.

Additionally, our nation is renewing its focus on re-domesticating its supply chain and manufacturing infrastructures. To keep Wisconsin competitive with other states, we need to increase the pipeline of well-trained machinists, and they need to be trained on advanced manufacturing equipment. The Department of Workforce Development estimates that by 2030, Wisconsin will need to increase its manufacturing workforce by an additional 24,000 people. That is above the 100,000-plus people that are retiring.

Wisconsin's Technical College System has proven itself to be the most efficient and effective training ground for developing this workforce.

AB549 intends to expand and improve our Technical College System's ability to train Wisconsin's Manufacturing workforce by utilizing dollar-to-dollar matching grants in two areas.

First, It creates a sixteen million dollar grant (one million for each tech school) so that the Technical Colleges can improve and enhance each school's manufacturing facilities and purchase advanced manufacturing equipment for training.

Second, to staff the improved facilities with quality instructors, the bill will provide a one-time grant of up to five thousand dollars as a sign-on bonus for advanced manufacturing and CDL instructors. The bill also directs the tech college to pay a retention bonus of five thousand dollars to instructors in those fields after five years of service.

October is Manufacturing Month, the perfect time to utilize our Tech college system to develop our manufacturing workforce and demonstrate our commitment to Wisconsin's Manufacturing Industry.

Thank you for your time,

Thomas A. Michalski

State Representative, District 13





October 24, 2023

To: Members of the Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

From: Vicki J. Martin PhD, President Milwaukee Area Technical College

Re: Assembly Bill 549 - Grants Related to Technical College Manufacturing and Truck Driving Programs

Thank you, Chairman Petryk, and members of the Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 549.

Manufacturing is a major economic driver of our economy. At Milwaukee Area Technical College we provide hands-on, real-world instruction at multiple campus locations that feature state-of-the-art labs and equipment in partnership with employers across our region. Some of our efforts to increase local talent pipelines include:

- Milwaukee Area Technical College is one of 30 colleges in the country selected to be part of the **Johnson Controls Community College Partnership program**, which aims to equip students with in-demand knowledge and skills that will support employment and a pathway for life-long careers upon graduation. In addition to the funding, Johnson Controls employees will support MATC through volunteering and mentorships, providing students with real-world experience, internship opportunities and professional networking connections. This partnership includes a new HVAC lab at a local high school - where Johnson Controls invested equipment and MATC expanded its dual enrollment programming for students seeking to gain college credit in the field of building systems.
- Milwaukee Area Technical College started the **Uniquely Abled Academy (UAA)** - a program designed to give students with autism the hands-on training needed to prepare for a career as a computer numerical control (CNC) operator. The UAA CNC program is a two semester, cohort-based training with more than 500 hours of instruction. Upon completion, graduates will earn a CNC Setup and Operations credential, qualifying them for several entry-level positions.
- **MATC launched its first full ride scholarship** in partnership with donors to the college's philanthropic partner - the MATC Foundation. The full-ride scholarship (covering the costs of tuition, books, equipment, transportation, food, childcare and more) was launched with a major gift from Ellen and Joe Checota, as of June 30th Ellen and Joe Checota have contributed \$3 million, and MolsonCoors is also supporting this scholarship with a \$100,000 donation. More than 170 individuals, foundations and corporations have collectively contributed. The primary purpose of the Checota MATC Scholarship Program is financial support for students pursuing certain short-term technical diplomas and certificates so they can quickly – in 18 months or less – enter the workforce and achieve meaningful employment in a wide range of occupations, including manufacturing, information technology and healthcare. In just 18 months, more than 760 students have been awarded this scholarship - 38% of scholars are studying programs within MATC's Manufacturing, Construction, and Transportation Career and Academic Pathway.

MATC welcomes a solution for recruiting and retaining faculty for these high-demand and high-paying professions. At present, Milwaukee Area Technical College's Advanced Manufacturing program is frozen due to challenges in recruiting faculty. Assembly Bill 549 looks to address this by providing financial support for

hiring bonuses for instructors in manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, and commercial driver's license programs.

While we are thankful for the intent of the legislation please consider:

- Including current employees as an eligible category to avoid faculty churn or faculty leaving due to low morale.
- Working with the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association on an appropriate definition of what programs would fall into "manufacturing" and "advanced manufacturing." At MATC, the manufacturing programs would include welding technology - associate degree - as well as technical diplomas of Advanced Metal Fabrication, CNC Swiss Multi-Axis Machining Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Technician, Machine Tool Operations, Manufacturing Maintenance, Tool and Die Making and Welding. Additional programs would be advanced manufacturing and truck driving. We are unclear if programs that have intersections with manufacturing - electrical power distribution, electrician, HVAC, building systems, and supply chain/logistics - would benefit from AB 549.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 549. This is an important step for students to acquire current, in-demand skills to support employer needs in our region. We also want to stress the importance of ongoing conversations as we prepare for the next biennial budget cycle. Resources will be needed to support these programs and other critical and high-demand industries that technical colleges serve. We want our technical colleges to continue to be strong, flexible, responsive, and reliable partners to state and local taxpayers, students, faculty, and our employer partners.



Dr. Morna K. Foy, President

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Assembly Bill 549
Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities
October 24, 2023

Chairman Petryk and Members of the Committee:

The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) asks for your support for Bill 549. This bill provides funding to the WTCS Board to support the recruitment and retention of instructors in manufacturing, advanced manufacturing and truck driving programs by awarding grants up to \$5,000 to pay hiring bonuses to such instructors that meet certain criteria. Additionally, the bill provides one-time funding to award grants up to \$1 million to technical colleges to purchase manufacturing or advanced manufacturing equipment or to enhance facilities for advanced manufacturing instruction. Under the bill, technical colleges must provide matching funds in an amount equal to or greater than the grant amount. Technical colleges that provide a hiring bonus to an instructor must provide a retention bonus of \$5,000 if the instructor remains employed in an eligible position after 5 years.

WTCS colleges have more than 100 credentials across the manufacturing area, including production planning and control, maintenance and manufacturing/process engineering, and advanced manufacturing programs that combine robotics (electrical and mechanical) with the integration of computation or data analytics. In addition, colleges offer truck driving programs including Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training. In 2023, more than 25,000 students were enrolled in manufacturing career area courses and over 1,300 were enrolled in truck driving courses. These programs produce strong outcomes and are in high demand among Wisconsin's employers. More than 90% of graduates are employed within six months of graduation and earn competitive, family-supporting salaries.

More details can be found in the WTCS 2022 Graduate Outcomes Report: <https://www.wtcsystem.edu/assets/Uploads/Publications/Report/WTCS-2022-Graduate-Outcomes.pdf>

The strong outcomes and in-demand programming offered by WTCS colleges start with high-quality faculty. Technical colleges rely upon industry-prepared faculty that are experts in their respective fields, connecting curriculum with industry trends and best practices. As employers themselves, WTCS colleges compete against industry wages in the recruitment and retention of their faculty and as a result, competitive faculty salaries are essential to sustain programming capacity. The funding provided in this bill to pay hiring bonuses to instructors supports colleges in their efforts to address their own skilled talent shortages and incentivizes more industry-prepared faculty to educate

WTCS students, ensuring students are work-ready for these important industries. A couple small amendments would strengthen the bill:

- Permit the GPR bonus funding to include \$5,000 bonuses to current manufacturing faculty when they have been with the college for 5 years. This will help limit faculty changing jobs just to receive the hiring and retention bonuses.
- The colleges will be fiscally challenged to provide the \$5,000 retention bonus after 5 years (particularly, with the challenges of paying faculty in other high demand areas, such as health care). Accordingly, we request that the \$500,000 appropriation continue beyond the biennium and to pay retention and hiring bonuses.

Effective, high-quality technical education requires state-of-the-art equipment and facilities to ensure that students can easily transition from the classroom to the production floor. Equipment and facilities for technical programs are comparatively more expensive than general education and require continued investment to maintain up to date. The grant funding provided in this bill helps technical colleges continue to invest in equipment and facilities that support manufacturing education that evolves with industry and best prepares students for employment with Wisconsin's manufacturers.

Please support Bill 549 and the investment it provides to support WTCS colleges' work to produce a skilled talent pipeline for Wisconsin. Thank you for your consideration.



October 24, 2023

Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

Layla Merrifield, Executive Director, WTCDBA

Assembly Bill 549 - Grants Related to Technical College Manufacturing & Truck Driving

Thank you, Chairman Petryk, and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak today. On behalf of Wisconsin's technical colleges, we support AB-549, including funding for hiring and recruitment bonuses, and \$16 million in matching grants for manufacturing program facilities. The future is bright for Wisconsin manufacturing. Wisconsin currently ranks 3rd among states for manufacturing output and is #1 in the country for manufacturing employment as a percentage of the workforce. There are over 9,000 manufacturing firms in Wisconsin, employing more than 470,000 workers with average wages of almost \$31 per hour. Today, skilled workers are precious and difficult to find—meaning layoffs during temporary economic slow-downs are less and less common, and industry-prepared experts are increasingly difficult for technical colleges to recruit and retain.

Technical colleges help power this important industry with skilled graduates and continuing education for incumbent employees that keep production lines up-to-date, efficient, globally competitive, and safe. Last year, Wisconsin technical colleges enrolled over 25,000 students in manufacturing courses. One example of the value: graduates of a one-year tech diploma in electromechanical maintenance reported earning an average of \$71,000 as a starting wage. Meanwhile, over 1,300 students took a CDL course at a technical college. Graduates of these very short-term programs—critical for moving all of those Wisconsin-made products—reported average starting wages of \$25 an hour.

Despite tech colleges' deep commitment to these programs, they are also some of the most costly to offer. As you know, tech colleges take pride in our open access mission—we accept the top 100% of high school graduates, and full-time tuition is about \$4,500 per year. Yet to equip and run a single manufacturing lab on our campuses—that might include CNC machines, plasma cutters, programmable logic controllers, welding booths, Fanuc robots, automated production lines, precision instrumentation, all staffed by industry experts—cost millions not only to assemble, but millions more to operate, year in and year out.

Manufacturing employer-partners are generous with their time and expertise, meeting at least twice annually with our instructors to review curriculum and fine-tune our offerings. They donate to student scholarships every year, pay full cost for customized training, reimburse employees' tuition costs, and donate surplus equipment when possible. However, the manufacturing industry, as well as the health care, trades, agriculture, and many other industries, count on the state and local taxpayers to be reliable partners in keeping technical colleges strong, flexible, and responsive.

Thank you once again for considering this investment. We ask that you also consider the following:

- Allowing current manufacturing faculty with at least 5 years of service to qualify for GPR bonus funding
- Additional flexibility in the eligible uses of matching grant dollars
- Continued conversations around the need for ongoing GPR funding for operations, for both manufacturing and the many other critical, high-demand industries that tech colleges serve.



To: Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities
Subject: Assembly Bill 549

On behalf of Northcentral Technical College (NTC), I would like to offer our support for AB 549.

Manufacturing is a critical industry in our District, and across the state. As local manufacturers look to invest in new technologies, automation and growth, their biggest challenge is skilled talent. Fortunately, they have a strong partner in NTC. We work diligently to create multiple pathways for students to ensure we are providing both a skilled workforce and supporting incumbent worker training and education. In turn, our local manufacturers give of their time, talent and dollars in support of our students through advisory committee participation, scholarships, youth apprenticeships, tuition reimbursement, capital campaign contributions, equipment donations and more. These connections and activities not only positively contribute to the College, but are essential to the success of local manufacturers and the local economy.

Please know that we remain deeply committed to supporting local manufacturers and the statewide manufacturing sector and we recognize the viability of the industry is critical to our state's economy. We also recognize that manufacturing programs are some of the most costly to offer, especially as we look to integrate the latest technology in automation, robotics and Industry 4.0 into our curriculum.

We appreciate the support and look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature and Governor to ensure we are able to remain responsive to the many industries, including manufacturing, who rely on us to be flexible, responsive and supportive of their workforce needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jeannie Worden
President, Northcentral Technical College

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**THE LEADING VOICE
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October 24, 2023

**TO: Members
Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities**

**FR: Brian Dake
President
Wisconsin Independent Businesses**

**RE: 2023 Assembly Bill (AB) 549 relating to: grants related to technical college
manufacturing and truck driving programs and making an appropriation.**

Chair Petryk and committee members my name is Brian Dake, President of Wisconsin Independent Businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of 2023 Assembly Bill (AB) 549.

By way of background, Wisconsin Independent Businesses (WIB) was formed in 1977 to provide small, independent business owners with an effective voice in the legislative and regulatory activities of state government. Today, we proudly represent more than 2,000 small business owners throughout Wisconsin. Most of our members (approximately 85%) own and operate businesses which have fewer than 25 employees and/or annual gross revenues of less than \$5 million.

Wisconsin small employers are struggling mightily to find qualified workers to fill open positions. This workforce shortage is particularly acute in labor-intensive industries such as manufacturing and trucking. In recent testimony before Congress, the President of the American Trucking Associations stated the shortage of qualified drivers reached a near record high of 78,000 in 2022 and is expected to increase to 160,000 by 2031.

WIB...Helping you where you need it.

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When Wisconsin manufacturing and trucking companies cannot fill open positions with qualified workers, customer orders and deliveries are delayed, supply chains are disrupted, and jobs are moved elsewhere. These adverse consequences extend well beyond just hometown Wisconsin companies.

From our perspective, there is not a single solution to this multifaceted long-term problem. Reducing the workforce shortage requires a comprehensive approach and targeted investments in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) are a step in the right direction.

Current law identifies the principal purposes of the WTCS as providing:

- occupational education and training/retraining programs; and
- customized training and technical assistance to business and industry.

Consistent with these statutory obligations, WTCS institutions provide occupational education training and customized training in manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing. Chippewa Valley, Fox Valley, and Waukesha County technical colleges currently offer commercial truck driver training programs.

Participants in these programs need access to knowledgeable, experienced instructors and the equipment they will use on the job. Subject matter experts are in demand and command a commensurate salary. Manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing processes are constantly evolving. So too is the equipment that is used.

AB 549 provides additional financial resources to Wisconsin technical colleges to ensure the future success of these training programs. Grants for hiring bonuses will help technical colleges recruit and retain knowledgeable, experienced instructors. Grants to purchase manufacturing or advanced manufacturing equipment will help technical colleges educate and train students and workers on the equipment that they will use in the workplace.

We respectfully ask for your support of AB 549.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.



Assembly Bill 549
Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities
October 24, 2023

Chairman Petryk and Members of the Committee:

I am Mike Shiels, Dean of the School of Applied Technologies, at Waukesha County Technical College. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding Assembly Bill 549. This bill holds great potential to significantly benefit the technical college system in Wisconsin by addressing critical needs and making important investments in our workforce development and education programs.

WCTC is known in southeastern Wisconsin for our strong manufacturing and truck driving programs. These industries make up the backbone of employers in Waukesha County and we take our role in educating students in these, and all our, areas of study seriously.

The provisions outlined in this bill, particularly the Instructor Recruitment and Retention Grants and the Manufacturing Capital Improvement Grants, are critical for our technical colleges. I'd like to highlight a few key reasons why I believe this bill is so essential for the future of our education system and workforce:

- 1. Economic Growth and Workforce Development:** Waukesha County is a dynamic contributor to Wisconsin's economy, and its manufacturing sector is vital. Waukesha County is home to over 1,700 manufacturing companies, employing over 54,000 individuals. These businesses generate approximately \$10 billion in economic output, making manufacturing a cornerstone of our local economy.
- 2. Instructor Recruitment and Retention:** Wisconsin is currently facing a shortage of qualified instructors in crucial fields such as advanced manufacturing, manufacturing, and truck driving. These programs are essential for our students' success and for meeting the growing demand for skilled workers in Wisconsin. The Instructor Recruitment and Retention Grants will provide much-needed financial incentives to attract and retain highly skilled professionals in these areas. This, in turn, will enhance the quality of education our students receive and prepare them for rewarding careers.

Students in our advanced manufacturing, manufacturing and transportation programs are taught by industry-prepared faculty who have spent years in their field of expertise. Recruiting and retaining these faculty can be challenging due to competing industry wages. The proposed Instructor Recruitment and Retention Grants for faculty in advanced manufacturing, manufacturing and truck driving could further incentivize industry professionals to teach at WCTC and, ultimately, would lead to more graduates in the workforce.



One unintended consequence of this hiring bonus is the potential to lose current and longstanding faculty who currently teach at technical colleges. By creating an opportunity for those who are being recruited to become faculty could have the opposite effect on current faculty who have excelled at delivering high-quality and work-ready graduates for years. It would be troubling to lose the very faculty who we rely on to mentor incoming faculty and who have consistently delivered well-prepared students for the workforce to the manufacturers we are trying to support.

- 3. Investment in Equipment and Facilities:** Technical colleges play a critical role in providing hands-on training and education. Our advanced manufacturing, manufacturing and truck driving programs are some of the most expensive to run at WCTC. This is due mostly to the costly investment in state-of-the-art equipment that is used to educate our students on. It is imperative that our equipment remain viable to current industry standards so that our students have a seamless transition from the classroom to the workplace. The funding provided through the Manufacturing Capital Improvement grants would strengthen our programming by continuing to invest in equipment and facilities that support what our manufacturers and employers are expecting: highly-trained and skilled graduates ready to work. This bill's allocation of grants to purchase manufacturing and advanced manufacturing equipment and to enhance facilities is a significant boost for our programs. Up-to-date equipment and state-of-the-art facilities are essential in preparing our students to meet the demands of modern industries. This investment will help us provide a top-notch educational experience, equipping our students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.
- 4. Investing in Wisconsin's Future:** By supporting this bill, the Assembly will be investing in the future of Wisconsin. A well-trained, highly skilled workforce is essential for economic growth, and our technical colleges play a central role in providing that education. The proposed grants will not only benefit our students but will also strengthen the state's economy by producing a workforce that is competitive on a national and global scale.

In conclusion, Assembly Bill 549 represents a significant step forward in addressing the challenges facing our technical college system and ensuring that we continue to provide high-quality education to our students. This bill is a means to strengthen our technical college system and, by extension, the Wisconsin workforce. By supporting instructor recruitment and retention and investing in equipment and facilities, we can better serve our students and prepare them for rewarding and in-demand careers. I urge you to support this bill to bolster our technical colleges, secure a brighter future for our students, and contribute to the economic growth of Wisconsin. With October being Manufacturing Month in the state of Wisconsin, I could see no better time to invest in our advanced manufacturing, manufacturing, and truck driving programs in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Thank you for your time.



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WAUKESHA COUNTY BUSINESS ALLIANCE

ADVOCATE DEVELOP ENGAGE GROW

To: Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

From: Suzanne Kelley, President & CEO, Waukesha County Business Alliance

Date: October 24, 2023

Re: Support for AB 550 & AB 549, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of Assembly Bill 550 and Assembly Bill 549.

As regional chamber of commerce, the Waukesha County Business Alliance is committed to creating a strong business climate. We work closely with our 1,200 member companies, representing over 75,000 employees in Southeastern Wisconsin. The Alliance's work in talent and workforce development drives solutions by creating a talent pipeline for area employers. Our business education partnerships connect students, educators, and administrators with area employers for opportunities in career exposure and experience. We are committed to helping our community develop a talent pipeline and we serve as the connection point between business and education for Waukesha County.

As an example, earlier this month, we welcomed 1,200 middle and high school students for our Experience the Trades Expo, which provides hands-on interactive opportunities with local manufacturing and construction companies to spur interest in pursuing a career in the trades. Throughout the past decade, we have made manufacturing career exploration opportunities available to more than 9,000 students through our Schools2Skills™ program.

In short, we know the connection between business and education is crucial to the success of our county. We also know that giving students the opportunity to participate in robust and meaningful technical education programs is critical to advancing this work.

Assembly Bill 550 (technical education equipment grants):

The Alliance supports Assembly Bill 550 to update the existing technical education equipment grant program. We have been strong supporters of the current grant program. Increasing the state's investment in technical education equipment for our schools is money well-spent.

- We support the bill's language that would allow the grants to be used for enhancement or improvement of an *existing* technical education facility. As more schools have technical education facilities in place, ongoing improvements are important to ensure equipment meets the current needs of employers. The Alliance has previously surveyed our schools on the make, model, and age of existing technical education equipment. We know that many schools have outdated equipment that is on the verge of failing, is too old to be repaired, and does not match the current equipment being used in industry. Those schools that have been able to invest in updated equipment offer a much enhanced experience for students.

- We also support the bill's change to allow grants to be used for the acquisition of *construction* equipment. At the Alliance, our manufacturing and construction companies continually partner together in career exposure opportunities for students. Both industries require a steady pipeline of students with hands-on, technical skills.
- We support raising the maximum grant to \$100,000 per recipient, especially as the cost of equipment continues to rise.

Our employers have been strong supporters of the technical education equipment grant program and are in support of expanding and enhancing the program through the changes suggested in this bill.

Assembly Bill 549 (technical college manufacturing programs):

The Alliance has a strong relationship with Waukesha County Technical College, and we understand the critical role technical colleges play in preparing students for technical and skills-based training for some of the highest demand careers in our state.

Our technical college, WCTC, is responsive to local workforce needs and is a strong partner for the business community. Each year we bring hundreds of middle and high school students to WCTC to learn about career pathways. We also work together to meet the needs of our local manufacturers, construction companies, health care providers and other industries to provide critical training to ensure a highly skilled workforce in our county.

The Alliance and WCTC recently collaborated on a Workforce Solutions Leadership Council to explore creative solutions to the workforce shortage. Our member companies participate in WCTC's advisory councils, which help ensure the college is responsive to the most relevant needs of local employers.

By providing grants for the purchase or enhancement of manufacturing and advanced manufacturing equipment, we are investing in opportunities for students to be trained for some of the most in-demand careers in Wisconsin. We need to continue growing the partnership with our state's technical college system to meet the demand of Wisconsin's manufacturing industry. Requiring a dollar-for-dollar match by recipient ensures the money is being spent by technical colleges that are also committed to advanced manufacturing.

We also support the bill's hiring bonus grant. Technical education instructors are some of the most challenging positions to hire. To provide students that are work-ready upon graduation, it's crucial that technical colleges can hire quality instructors with real-world experience. In today's hiring environment, bonuses are common in the private sector, which is where technical colleges are often competing for talent.

Thank you for allowing me to share a few comments in support of both bills. Technical education at the high school and college level is vital to meet the demands of employers. As an organization that represents business, we know that both bills will help to support a strong talent pipeline, which is desperately needed by our employers.

Thank you.



TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

FROM: Rachel Ver Velde, Senior Director of Workforce, Education and Employment Policy

DATE: October 24, 2023

RE: Support for AB 549 & AB 550, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550. I want to thank Representative Michalski, Representative Green and Senator Stafsholt for authoring these important pieces of legislation to promote and expand access to manufacturing and advanced manufacturing programs for young people.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes, and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business. That mission includes making sure Wisconsin's youth are prepared and ready to participate in today's workforce.

Unfortunately, employers in Wisconsin have severe worker shortages and an inability to fill key positions. According to WMC's most recent *Wisconsin Employer Survey* conducted in June 2023, the biggest challenge facing Wisconsin employers is the workforce shortage, with 75% of employers indicating that they are struggling to hire workers. As employers throughout Wisconsin continue to have worker shortages it becomes even more important that their employees have the right skills for the workplace.

WMC believes that access to manufacturing education programs at an early age provides real value not only to the participants of technical education programs, but also for the employers that hire these participants. WMC is supportive of initiatives to expand access to manufacturing equipment in school districts and in technical colleges.

Assembly Bill 549:

WMC strongly believes that Wisconsin technical colleges need to be focused on providing technical and skills-based training. Employers desperately need skilled workers and technical colleges must be equipped to provide students with the proper training to access well-paying, high demand fields. We support the grant program in Assembly Bill XXX that will require the Technical College System Board to award one-time grants up to \$1 million for the purchase of manufacturing and advanced manufacturing equipment, or to enhance facilities for advanced manufacturing instruction. These

grants require a dollar-for-dollar match by recipient technical college, making sure these grants will only go to technical colleges that are committed to advancing manufacturing curriculum. We are also hopeful that the grant program to provide hiring bonuses for instructors in manufacturing, advanced manufacturing and commercial driver's license programs will attract additional instructors, particularly those with real-life experience.

Assembly Bill 550:

WMC is glad to see this legislation to update the existing technical education equipment grant program. This current grant program is helpful for local school districts to help defray the cost of expensive equipment that they need to educate students on advanced manufacturing. Too often WMC has heard from small and rural school districts that they are unable to access this grant program due to the current requirements. That is why we are very happy to see language in this bill allowing multiple schools to apply as a consortium and the requirement to award one-third of the grant dollars to sparsity aid districts. Additionally, raising the maximum grant to \$100,000 per recipient will allow school districts to buy more advanced equipment to train their students. Finally, WMC is pleased to see the matching funds required changed to require only a 100% match if all of the dollars come from a private source.

When the worker shortage is as dire as the current environment, employers need every tool in the toolbox to attract workers. Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550 are a good step forward to raise the awareness of manufacturing and increase participation in manufacturing and technical education programs at both the high school and technical college level. WMC urges members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities to support these important pieces of legislation.

October 24, 2023

To: Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

From: Jon Emerick, Executive Vice President, Celerity Staffing Solutions

Re: Support for AB 549 & AB 550, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs

This letter to express my sincerest support for the above Assembly Bills. Our company provides contingent staffing and recruiting services for hundreds of employers throughout the State of Wisconsin. We operate at the front lines of the shrinking labor market. So often we see individuals seeking employment that lack the basic skills and experience for many entry level manufacturing positions. Any legislation that closes the gap between how students are prepared to enter the workforce and what skills, habits and understanding our State's employers are looking for.

Many factors are conspiring against employers in this market and we are in a battle to keep workers engaged and learning. Unfortunately, we only see the challenges increasing in the near future. My hope is that in the next few years we will see young folks enter the workforce better equipped for the needs of our employers.

Sincerely,

Jon Emerick

Jon Emerick
Exec. Vice President



RE: Support for AB 549 & AB 550, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs

Integra appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550. These are important pieces of legislation to promote and expand access to manufacturing and advanced manufacturing programs for young people within our state.

Integra is a member of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC), which is the largest general business association in Wisconsin. We support WMC in their mission that includes making sure Wisconsin's youth are prepared and ready to participate in today's workforce.

Our company in Wisconsin has experienced worker shortages, particularly skilled positions. According to WMC's most recent *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, the biggest challenge facing Wisconsin employers is the workforce shortage, with 75% of employers indicating that they are struggling to hire workers. As an employer in Wisconsin for over 40 years, it is important that our employees have the right skills for the workplace.

Integra believes that access to manufacturing programs at an early age provides real value not only to the participants of technical education programs, but also for us as an employer that hires these participants. Integra is supportive of initiatives to expand access to manufacturing equipment in school districts and in technical colleges.

Integra agrees with WMC that Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550 are important to raise awareness of manufacturing. We believe it is imperative that students throughout Wisconsin have access to manufacturing technical education programs and we are glad to see legislators take action to do so.

Integra joins WMC in asking the members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities to support these important bills.

Stacy Roberts, Human Resources and Safety Manager

Written Testimony for Kenny Skar

Kenny Skar, owner of Vincent Tool Technologies Corp
Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities Hearing on
Assembly Bill 549 and 550
October 24, 2023

To Chairman Petryk and Committee Members:

My name is Kenny Skar, and I am a concerned business owner of a manufacturing company in Chippewa Falls, WI that employs just under 40 local men and women. I am the Co-Chair President of the Chippewa Valley Technical College Machine Tool Program as well as an Alumni. I am submitting testimony about how the lack of proper funding opportunities and teaching resources for local schools negatively impacts the development of the workforce that our company (and companies like ours) need in order to be successful and continue to grow.

Getting students interested in manufacturing means helping them understand what working in manufacturing these days is truly like. It's not the same kind of environment that their parents or grandparents may have experienced, but it is a struggle to get kids to see that and give manufacturing a chance. In recent years the enrollment in machining programs at our local tech schools has dropped dramatically and if we don't do something soon our communities are not going to be able to offer the good paying jobs they do currently because the manufacturing businesses will be forced to leave and go where the workforce is. Manufacturing businesses in our rural areas are often the lifeblood of a smaller town and closing the doors would lead to the loss of other jobs in these towns too. The restaurants, convenience stores, and other small shops would be gone because there simply wouldn't be enough people coming into town to sustain them. Manufacturing is one of the few industries that brings new money into a state and local economy, rather than simply rotating dollars like some other industries, so maintaining the strength of manufacturing in WI is important to all of us that live here.

The extent to which these two introduced pieces of legislation, Assembly Bills 549 and 550, would help boost manufacturing education programs is significant. These programs have a direct impact on the manufacturing labor force that we, and other businesses like us, rely on. Therefore, providing this testimony seemed a needed effort to make sure the small-town business owner's voice is heard by the legislature. With close to a \$7 billion surplus I strongly feel there is room not only to save some funds for a rainy day, but also invest in the future of our youth, which in turn is an investment in our manufacturing industry and our state economy.

Assembly Bill 550 would do a lot to combat the increasingly difficult challenges that we are faced with when it comes to workforce demands. Too frequently, there are just not enough young people entering the industry to come close to keeping up with the demand for labor. We have to get manufacturing in front of more young people while they are in high school, and we have to give them a bigger taste of it if we want them to seriously consider it as a career option when they graduate. Assembly Bill 550 will double the dollar amount that the existing grant program offers which would go a long way toward helping school districts with the real costs involved in purchasing updated equipment. Inflation has hit us all, and industry equipment is

certainly not exempt from that. Getting updated equipment is costly but that's what is needed if we are going to teach students in a meaningful way about the manufacturing opportunities in today's world. Boosting these school budgets for running these middle and high school level classes is another form of assistance needed so hopefully that will be addressed in the future.

The other important thing that Assembly Bill 550 would do is dramatically reduce the required matching funds (from 200% to 100%) which is extremely helpful to the schools when local businesses may already be strapped for cash and want to help but collectively they just can't stretch far enough to get the school to the goal amount they need. Smaller towns have fewer local businesses to draw on and I think this is sometimes forgotten when these programs are offered. It's important for small schools to have a chance at these grant funds just like the larger schools. This bill would help make this grant program more available to all the rural areas and that's important to us because we hire from a lot of small towns around us. It may sound surprising but our staff is made up of people that live in *eight* different surrounding towns. That's pretty significant for a company the size of ours. It tells you that the pool of students needed to keep manufacturing successful in Wisconsin *is* out there, even in a small area such as ours, but we have to get the resources to them. We have to get the equipment and teaching tools into the small rural schools not just in the larger ones so these rural students can get similar exposure to manufacturing.

Assembly Bill 549 will help make sure our local tech schools can also offer updated equipment and modern learning environments to keep the attention of the students that come to them for manufacturing programs. This bill even goes a step further by encouraging instructors to head in the direction of teaching manufacturing which is the out-of-the-gate kind of assistance needed to build these technical programs up in our local technical colleges.

Thank you to Chairman Petryk and to the members of the Committee for hearing this testimony. Your consideration of these bills and presenting them to the full Assembly matters, and I am hopeful the Senate will support them as well so they can make it to the Governor's desk.

Respectfully,



Kenny Skar



innovation. technology. results.

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities
FROM: Cathy Longtin, CFO, Federal Foam Technologies, Inc.
DATE: October 24, 2023

Support for AB 549 & AB 550, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs

I want to thank Representative Green, Representative Michalski and Senator Stafsholt for authoring these important pieces of legislation to promote and expand access to manufacturing and advanced manufacturing programs for young people.

Federal Foam Technologies is a foam and plastic fabricator and has over 300 employees in three states with Wisconsin having the largest number of employees. We continue to grow our presence in the state with the recent acquisition of a building in New Richmond, WI. We are committed to this state.

Unfortunately, like many other employers in Wisconsin, Federal Foam Technologies is burdened by the severe worker shortages and an inability to fill key positions. Our two Wisconsin sites have had an average of 75 open positions the entire year of 2023. That is twenty-five percent of the entire company workforce. We need help.

Federal Foam Technologies (FFT) believes that access to manufacturing programs at an early age provides real value not only to the participants of technical education programs, but also for the employers that hire these participants. FFT is supportive of initiatives to expand access to manufacturing equipment in school districts and in technical colleges.

Assembly Bill 549:

FFT is glad to see this legislation to update the existing technical education equipment grant program. This current grant program is helpful for local school districts to help defray the cost of expensive equipment that they need in order to educate students on advanced manufacturing. Additionally, raising the maximum grant to \$100,000 per recipient will allow school districts to buy more advanced equipment to train their students. Finally, FFT is happy to see the matching funds required changed to require only a 100% percent match if all of the dollars come from a private source.

Assembly Bill 550

FFT strongly believes that Wisconsin technical colleges need to be focused on providing technical and skills-based training. We desperately need skilled workers and technical colleges must be equipped to provide

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COKATO DIVISION 150 Industrial Park . Cokato, MN 55321 . 320.286.2696 . fax 320.286.2428



students with the proper training to access well-paying, high demand fields. We support the grant program in Assembly Bill 550 that will require the Technical College System Board to award one-time grants up to \$1 million for the purchase of manufacturing and advanced manufacturing equipment, or to enhance facilities for advanced manufacturing instruction. These grants require a dollar-for-dollar match by recipient technical college, making sure these grants will only go to technical colleges that are committed to advancing manufacturing curriculum. We are also hopeful that grant program to provide hiring bonuses for instructors in manufacturing, advanced manufacturing and commercial driver's license programs will incent additional instructors, particularly those with real-life experience.

When the worker shortage is as dire as the current environment, we need every tool in the toolbox to attract workers. Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550 are good steps forward to raise the awareness of manufacturing and increase participation in manufacturing and technical education programs at both the high school and technical college level. Federal Foam Technologies, Inc urges members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities to support these important pieces of legislation.



GREEN BAY PACKAGING

BRYAN A. HOLLENBACH
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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October 23, 2023

Members of the Assembly Committee on
Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

Re: Support for Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550

Dear Members of the Committee:

Green Bay Packaging Inc. strongly supports and stresses the urgency to pass two very important bills – Assembly Bill 549 and Assembly Bill 550, relating to technical education equipment grants and grants for technical college manufacturing programs.

Green Bay Packaging is celebrating its 90th year of existence and we continue to play a major role in the economy of the state of Wisconsin. We are headquartered in Green Bay, Wisconsin, employ over 2,000 in the state, and invest at a very high rate. We, like most every other manufacturing employer in Wisconsin, have been experiencing severe worker shortages and struggle with the ability to fill positions with skilled workers.

Employers desperately need these skilled workers and technical colleges must be equipped to provide students with the proper training to acquire these well-paying jobs. We feel strongly that we need to do everything in our power to support legislation that adds more trained individuals to our workforce.

Green Bay Packaging urges members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities to support these two important bills. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Bryan A. Hollenbach
Executive Vice President

To: Chairman Petryk and the Committee on Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

I am writing this letter on behalf of Ashley Furniture Industries, LLC (Ashley), of Arcadia, Wisconsin. As you may know, Ashley is the world's largest manufacturer of home furnishings and the number one furniture store brand in North America. As one of the largest employers in western Wisconsin, we are proud to have an extensive history in supporting technical education at both the K-12 and technical college level – which currently exceeds over \$7 million in the past six years for Wisconsin alone. This includes the Ashley Mobile Skills Laboratory, VEX Robotics, FIRST Robotics, SkillsUSA, and the latest development of creating Advanced Manufacturing learning centers at Whitehall School District and Luther High School.

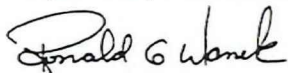
This letter is to express our support for Assembly Bills 549 & 550 as they will further advance the State of Wisconsin as a leader in workforce development, manufacturing output, and overall economic growth. However, to experience this growth, it will require heavy and continued investment to ensure that Wisconsin continues to create a "Positive Balance of Trade". Currently, Wisconsin is #2 in manufacturing jobs per capita (State of Indiana is #1 in US) and we need to strive to become #1 in order to compete within an ever-changing global economy.

While we commend the efforts being made to bolster technical education through these proposed bills, it is essential to acknowledge that even more needs to be done. **As the manufacturing landscape continues to evolve and increasingly rely on emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, the demand for highly skilled individuals is growing ever more crucial.** To ensure we as a state and nation have an adequate workforce pipeline, it is imperative that the state allocates additional funding to technical education programs across all of Wisconsin.

We respectfully urge you to consider further investment in technical education by providing increased financial support to school districts and technical college systems. By doing so, we can foster the development of a diverse and skilled workforce that meets the evolving demands of the manufacturing industry and contributes to the economic growth of our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We appreciate your dedication to addressing workforce issues in manufacturing and look forward to collaborating with you to create a stronger and more vibrant workforce in Wisconsin.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald G. Wanek".

Ronald G. Wanek
Ashley Furniture Industries, LLC
Founder and Chairman of the Board

BOLDT[®]

BUILD BOLDLY

The Boldt Company
2121 E. Capitol Drive
Appleton, WI 54911

920.225.6225
boldt.com

October 23, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

The Boldt Company is pleased to write this letter in support of the Technical Education Equipment Grant Legislation and Technical College Grant Programs Legislation. We proudly partner with our educational institutions that encourage the future workforce to enter careers in manufacturing, which flow into transferable skills utilized in our construction industry.

We believe these two bills will help align education and the manufacturing industry by equipping classrooms with the technology, resources, and knowledgeable teachers needed for a comprehensive educational experience. We believe it is critical for students to be proactively exposed to career pathways in manufacturing, and other industries like construction, to make informed career decisions post-graduation. Boldt has invested in Wisconsin's educational system through participation in Youth Apprenticeship and providing Internship employment opportunities. Our experience has emphasized the valuable combination and partnership of classroom and hands-on learning experiences.

Boldt's workforce needs continue to grow. We will continue to collaborate and leverage resources available to employers through our technical college system. I urge you to consider how these bills support skills enhancement opportunities for the future workforce, which builds a stronger community, creates economic investment, and bolsters a better Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Boldt
CEO