



***Testimony in favor of the Truth in Maple Syrup Act***

***AB 602 / SB 567***

*January 24, 2024*

*Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy and Small Business Development*

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

Wisconsin's production of high quality agricultural products is not only a key driver of our economy, but a matter of deep civic pride and a touchstone of our shared culture and history.

Our state has a rich tradition both of producing delicious foods, and of helping consumers understand where our food comes from. Wisconsin has been a leader in food labeling and education, building bridges between farmers and all of us who eat what farmers produce. For example, under Senator Tammy Baldwin's leadership, Wisconsin producers are leading the way to ensure accurate labeling for dairy and non-dairy products, and 15 years ago the legislature acted to stop honey that's adulterated with corn syrup from being labeled pure honey.

In my opinion, there is no agricultural food product more delicious than pure maple syrup. And perhaps that is why it is so often imitated, assaulting our taste buds with corn syrup and artificial flavors and sweeteners. Delicious breakfast food is important to many of our constituents throughout our state, but is it important enough to legislate?

While this is a light-hearted bill, it gets at one of our most important roles as legislators: to protect the public. Consumers have a right to receive the product they order and pay for. People have the right to know what is in the foods they eat. And it's a core responsibility of the government to ensure that those rights are protected, through appropriate regulation that doesn't interfere with our freedom to choose a sad, inferior, or imitation product.

The Truth in Maple Syrup bill makes sure that no one will be misled by inaccurate labels or descriptions, by reserving the term "maple syrup" only for the pure, heavenly concentrated sap that comes 100% from a maple tree. Importantly, this bill does not mandate anything. Restaurants and patrons may continue to smother their pancakes in any liquid they like. No one must offer, serve, order, or consume maple syrup. The bill only requires that IF a restaurant advertises "maple syrup" on the menu, it must be genuine.

This bill is supported by small family farmers throughout our state, many of whom rely on tapping and maple syrup production to diversify their farm incomes. Wisconsin's maple syrup producers crafted 402,000 gallons of maple syrup in 2023, valued at \$13.9 million dollars – and that's a significant undercount, as there are many small producers who do not report their yields to the state association. Wisconsin is one of the top 4 maple syrup-producing states in the nation. According to UW-Extension, "Wisconsin still boasts the highest yield of syrup per tap in the country: an average of 0.408 gallons per tap in 2023. The nationwide average was 0.311 gallons per tap."

We have a lot to be proud of in Wisconsin – and our maple syrup and consumer protection laws are among them. Passing this legislation will enhance both. Thank you, and happy brunching.



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## **Assembly Bill 602**

### **Public Testimony**

**Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy and Small Business Development**

**January 24, 2024**

Thank you Chairman Gundrum for the opportunity to testify today on Assembly Bill 602. I would also like to thank Senator Roys for joining me in authoring this bill.

Wisconsin farmers work hard each spring to collect and boil down sap to create maple syrup. As a former farmer and longtime member of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture, I am always looking for ways to help farmers thrive. One way that farmers diversify their crop is by making maple syrup. Our state must extend our commitment to promoting agriculture to maple syrup. A simple way to help both consumers and maple syrup producers is by ensuring that consumers know what they are getting when ordering maple syrup.

Consumers want to know what their food is made of. We have worked to pass truth in labeling bills for a number of food products, such as dairy and meat products. We should do the same for maple syrup. This bill ensures that those who order maple syrup at a restaurant get maple syrup.

Wisconsin's state tree is the sugar maple. Please join me in showing our respect for our state tree, its wonderful products, and Wisconsin agriculture by moving this legislation forward.