



ALEX A. DALLMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Favor of Assembly Bill 856

Assembly Committee on Tourism

January 17th, 2024

Thank you, Chairwoman Magnafici and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you concerning Assembly Bill 856, which would create the fund at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to assist entities in attracting and hosting large-scale public events in the state of Wisconsin, with understanding that grant funds can be awarded for planning future qualifying events. I would also like to thank Senator Ballweg for her leadership on this legislation.

This grant funding would support communities in their efforts to attract highly sought after events and stimulate economic development. To be awarded a grant, entities must provide matching funds and a positive cost/benefit analysis as part of their application.

In the last few years, the State of Wisconsin had the opportunity to host large-scale, national events. An event such as the 2021 Ryder Cup was projected to bring more than \$120 million of economic impact throughout Eastern Wisconsin. The 2025 NFL Draft that will be held in Green Bay estimates to bring 240,000 attendees and roughly \$20 million to the City of Green Bay. This totals \$94 million of impact to the State of Wisconsin.

The funding for this program was included in the 2023-25 state budget. An appropriation of \$10 million, which can be requested by the WEDC, is currently in the JFC supplemental account.

Thank you again, Chairwoman Magnafici, for the opportunity to testify before this committee today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have



Assembly Bill 856: Grants awarded by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation for the purpose of attracting opportunities and events to Wisconsin
Testimony of State Senator Joan Ballweg
Assembly Committee on Tourism
January 17, 2024

Thank you, members of the committee, for hearing this bill today.

Assembly Bill 856 creates a Major Opportunities and Events Grant Fund. These funds, housed at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, will assist entities in attracting and hosting large-scale public events in the State of Wisconsin.

In recent years, Wisconsin has been given the opportunity to host several large-scale, national events. Events like the 2021 Ryder Cup was projected to bring more than \$120 million of economic impact throughout Eastern Wisconsin between Milwaukee and Green Bay. The 2025 NFL Draft, which will be held in Green Bay, is estimated to bring 240,000 attendees and an impact of \$20 million to the City of Green Bay and a total impact of \$94 million to the State of Wisconsin.

This grant program, which was funded in the 2023-25 state budget, will support communities in their efforts to attract highly sought after events and stimulate economic development. If approved by the legislature, this fund will have an allocation of \$10 million that can be awarded for planning future qualifying events. Specifically, grant moneys may be used to undertake a project to do one or more of the following:

1. Bid against other states or jurisdictions outside Wisconsin to attract an opportunity or event that will draw national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to Wisconsin.
2. Host an opportunity or event that will attract national exposure and drive economic development and visitors to Wisconsin that the eligible applicant has secured through a competitive bid against other states or jurisdictions outside Wisconsin.

To be awarded a grant, entities must provide matching funds and a positive cost/benefit analysis as part of their application.

This legislation is supported by members of Wisconsin's tourism industry and was passed by the senate on January 16.

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



To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism
Rep. Gae Magnafici, Chair

From: Bill Elliott, President & CEO

Date: January 17, 2024

Re: Support for Assembly Bill 856, Relating to: grants awarded by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation for the purpose of attracting opportunities and events to Wisconsin

On behalf of the approximately 600 members of the Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association, as well as my role as this year's President of the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin, we request your support of Assembly Bill 856, relating to grants awarded by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation for the purpose of attracting opportunities and events to Wisconsin. As you are aware, funding for this program was included in the state budget, and this bill establishes the administration for the matching grant program.

Wisconsin is well positioned to attract major events to the state, we see that today with the upcoming RNC, the NFL Draft and the recent Ryder Cup competition. This bill allows us to capitalize on these successes and draw even more people to our great state. From our professional and collegiate sports facilities to our world-class golf courses and some of the most unique event venues in the US, there is no doubt that Wisconsin has a lot to offer. Not only do these events and attractions help fill up hotel rooms around the state, but they also play a prominent role vital to growing the tourism industry's \$23.7 billion impact on the state economy. This grant program will put heads in beds, people in pubs, shoppers in stores, and gallons in gas tanks. Hands down, it's a win-win proposition for the state.

Through the matching grant program, Wisconsin can assist private and public entities in the very competitive process of securing major events and attractions to the state. Please vote to support Assembly Bill 856.

Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association

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