



ROB STAFSHOLT

STATE SENATOR • 10th SENATE DISTRICT

(608) 266-7745
Toll Free: (800) 862-1092
Sen.Stafsholt@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

DATE: October 18th, 2023
RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 258
TO: Members of the Committee on Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry
FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt

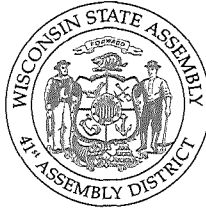
Thank you fellow members of the Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry for hearing Senate Bill 258 relating to creating a rural pharmacy practice grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board, exempting from taxation amounts received from such a grant program, and granting rule-making authority.

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, most of Wisconsin's rural areas like my district suffered from a lack of care providers in healthcare. The quality is there, but the number of care providers is dwindling. The reasons for labor shortages are many across all healthcare fields, and our goal is to specifically address the rural pharmacy issue with this bill.

One potential solution to address the goal of improved access and improved community outcomes would be to incentivize graduates from Wisconsin's schools of Pharmacy to serve in rural/underserved communities upon graduation.

We are proposing legislation that would create a small, simple, pilot grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board for graduates to offset the cost of higher education with a commitment to practice in rural/underserved communities for three years.

Again, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 258. I would appreciate your support on this piece of legislation and would be happy to answer any questions.



ALEX A. DALLMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 258

Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry

October 18, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Quinn and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you on Senate Bill 258, which would create a rural pharmacy practice grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board. I would also like to thank Senator Stafsholt for his leadership on this legislation.

The Rural Pharmacy Incentive Program would incentivize graduates from Wisconsin's three Schools of Pharmacy to serve in rural communities. This bill would create a small pilot grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board for graduates to offset the cost of higher education with a commitment to practice in rural communities over three years.

Currently, the average amount of debt that a student accrues from a School of Pharmacy is approximately \$180,000. This program would provide ten students up to \$30,000 per year for three years if they commit to serve in an underserved area for three years after graduation.

For those of us that live in rural communities, we have seen a decrease in access to quality healthcare because the number of healthcare providers are shrinking. SB 258 will specifically work to alleviate the growing healthcare gap in our rural communities

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

October 18, 2023

Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues, and Forestry
300 SE Main St.
Madison, WI 53703

Chairman Quinn and members of the Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues, and Forestry,

My name is Dr. Erik Jorvig and I am Dean of the Concordia University School of Pharmacy. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of SB258 to help support access for rural pharmacy services. Pharmacists remain the most accessible healthcare provider especially for our rural communities. In many rural communities, a pharmacist may be the only accessible healthcare provider available within a reasonable driving distance. Pharmacists are highly trained and imminently capable health care providers. Especially as seen during the pandemic, pharmacists are ready and willing to provide quality healthcare services to their communities on a variety of issues including immunization delivery, medication management, chronic disease management and prevention, among others. Coupled with the recent passage of the pharmacist provider status in 2021 Act 98 legislation, pharmacists are more than ever capable of practicing as a mid-level primary care provider positively affecting the healthcare outlook for rural communities.

The main difficulty for rural communities has been enticing pharmacy graduates to explore rural pharmacy as a career option. Many pharmacy graduates, even those originating from rural areas, choose to relocate to urban settings with the impression of more pharmacy job opportunities, higher pay and more career advancement. This is despite the pressing need for pharmacy services of the rural communities from which they come.

This bill creates an affordable incentive system to offset the departure of these highly skilled graduates to urban settings. With graduation debt in excess of \$180,000, the ability to qualify for loan repayment can be a great incentive for these pharmacy graduates to reconsider practicing pharmacy in a rural setting to provide care and connect with those communities. Quality provision of healthcare by pharmacists is known to decrease overall healthcare costs, by decreasing medication related waste, duplication and adverse events, while increasing overall quality of care. This healthcare cost savings can be anticipated to offset the initial cost of this program. In that way, everyone wins: the rural communities have increased access and quality of healthcare; the pharmacy graduates have a financial incentive to choose rural pharmacy practice and the state of Wisconsin can achieve those goals through minimal initial cost.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express my support for SB258.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erik Jorvig

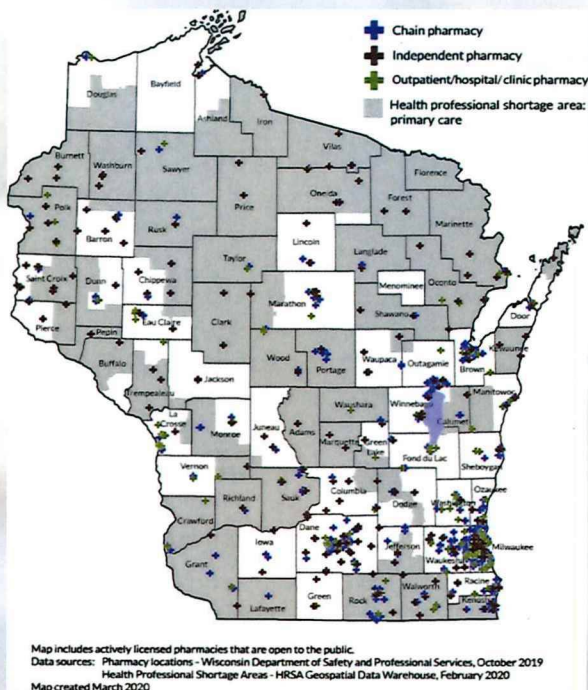
RURAL PHARMACY INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Incentivizing pharmacists to practice in high-need rural areas can improve the delivery and effectiveness of primary care, creating better health outcomes for our rural communities.

Taking Action on Rural Pharmacy

Wisconsin's health care systems play a valuable role in the economic impact of their communities. The federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recently ranked Wisconsin first in the Midwest for our healthcare quality and among the best in the nation.¹ Access to quality care in all areas of the state should remain a priority as many look to Wisconsin as a top provider of world renowned care.

Providing incentives for pharmacists in rural communities will make Wisconsin a continued leader and add economic viability to their communities.



Pharmacists are typically located closer to most Americans than primary care providers. Due to financial pressures, a disproportionate number of pharmacists choose to work in urban or suburban settings.³

This misallocation of pharmacists is a problem, and addressing it will increase access and improve healthcare outcomes in rural Wisconsin.

Cost Benefits of Pharmacist-Involved Care

- Pharmacists interventions with chronic conditions save an average of **\$1,000 per patient per year.**²
- Reduce health costs up to **\$1,800 per patient per year**²
- Fewer sick days for employers²
- Reduction in average cost per cardiovascular event by **13%**²

\$900,000, incentivizing 10 pharmacists over three years

Potential to serve 1,000,000 patients many who are on Medicaid with chronic conditions

If each rural pharmacist addresses medication management issues in just 50 Medicaid patients each year this investment pays for itself.

References

- 1 "Healthy Hospitals Healthy Communities". Wisconsin Hospitals Association. 2020
- 2 "Pharmacies: Improving Health, Reducing Costs". National Association of Chain Drug Stores, Inc. 2011
- 3 "Extended Pharmacists Provider Status FAQ". Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin.



Peter Welch
The Welch Group
Managing Partner and EVP
Office: 608.819.0150

Summary

SB 258/AB 255 establishes a rural pharmacy practice grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to encourage pharmacists to engage in the practice of pharmacy in medically underserved areas in the state

The Rural Pharmacy Incentive Program would incentivize graduates from Wisconsin's three Schools of Pharmacy to serve in rural communities.

Currently, the average amount of student debt from a School of Pharmacy is approximately \$180,000. To offset the cost of tuition and encourage students to attend a School of Pharmacy in-state, this bill establishes a program that would do the following:

- Pharmacists must commit to serve in a medically underserved area for at least 3 years post graduation.
- Eligible pharmacist may be provided up to \$30,000 per year in financial assistance for up to three years.
- No more than 10 pharmacists may be eligible per year.
- Financial assistance is provided after the pharmacist's first year of pharmacy practice in a medically underserved area in WI



HEALTH INSURANCE · HEALTH PLAN



The Rural Pharmacy Coalition thanks you for your attention to this growing concern. We envision Wisconsin as a leader in the nation for providing access to healthcare in our rural communities. Wisconsin must work towards quality healthcare to be provided in all regions of the state. We look forward to working with you further on this pressing issue.

History

2021-22 Legislative Session

AB 869

Introduced by: Representatives Dallman, Cabral Guevara, Edming, Gundrum, Novak, Oldenburg, and Zimmerman

- In Committee on Colleges and Universities

SB 872

Introduced by: Senator Stafsholt and Senator Felzkowski

- Passed Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues

2023-25 Legislative Session

SB 258/AB 255

Authors: Representative Dallman and Senator Stafsholt

