



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 584

Thank you Mr. Chairman and committee members for today's hearing on Senate Bill 584 and its substitute amendment. This is a simple bill, requiring the Department of Transportation to erect highway signs for two of Racine County's historic structures – the Prairie School, and Wind Point Lighthouse, both located in the village of Wind Point.

The Prairie School was founded as a pre-K through 12th grade school in 1965. Designed by Taliesin Associates, an architectural firm founded by Frank Lloyd Wright's apprentices, it is a prime example of Frank Lloyd Wright's "prairie style." It is one of three Racine County sites that are part of the Frank Lloyd Wright trail. The other two, Wingspread and the SC Johnson headquarters have directional highway signs to their locations, Prairie School does not. This bill corrects that oversight.

The Wind Point Lighthouse, is another historic structure in Racine. Although it has no connection to Frank Lloyd Wright, it is on the National Register of Historic Places. It has stood 108 feet tall on the shore of Lake Michigan since 1880. Unfortunately, like the Prairie School, there is no directional signage on the freeway to direct people to the Wind Point Lighthouse.

Both the Lighthouse and the Prairie School are conveniently located off of I-94's Highway K exit in Racine County. Placing a highway sign at Highway K directing people to these sites will not only showcase our wonderful history, but will also direct more people to experience the beautiful community of Wind Point.

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ROBERT WITTKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 62nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
February 6, 2024

Chair Tomczyk and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 584 and its substitute amendment. Senate Bill 584 was drafted at the request of The Prairie School located in Wind Point, where I reside. It is a private, independent, college preparatory day school serving early school/pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 founded in 1965. Notable individuals have attended and matriculated The Prairie School including the Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer.

The design of The Prairie School is Frank Lloyd Wright architecturally-styled and the school is part of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail.

For all its time in Racine, The Prairie School has been without directional signage from I-94. I believe it is time to make a change.

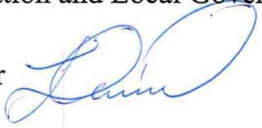
Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to Senate Bill 584 as introduced, would add to the same directional sign another historic site just around the corner from The Prairie School. The Wind Point Lighthouse, also located in the Village of Wind Point on the shores of Lake Michigan, stands 108 feet tall and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1880 and was lit for the first time on November 15, 1880 and continues to be lit to this day. Like The Prairie School, Wind Point Lighthouse has no directional signage from I-94.

With passage of SB 584 as amended by SSA 1, travelers on I-94 will be made aware of the opportunity to visit these historic locations and enjoy more of beautiful Wind Point on the shores of Lake Michigan.

This is an important change for these valuable historic Wisconsin resources. Residents and visitors will appreciate the directional signs.

Thank you for holding this public hearing. I hope you will support Senate Bill 584 as amended.

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

FROM: Daniel Henderson, WCRIS Project Manager 

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: SB 584 - Erecting highway signs for The Prairie School in Racine County.

Thank you for your consideration. The Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS) encourages your support of SB 584.

As you may know, WCRIS represents over 600 private schools and over 100,000 students in K-12 schools across the state. The Prairie School of Racine is among the oldest schools in our association.

The Prairie School is regularly one of the top-performing private schools in the state with a rich history that attracts international attention. Its graduates include Wisconsin state legislators.

Started in 1965, The Prairie School seeks to provide quality education and prepare students for college and their careers. More importantly, the school aims to create students who will be able to give back as strong citizens of the state.

Beyond the academic success of the Prairie School, its existence is a noteworthy piece of Wisconsin history. The campus was designed by an understudy of the world-renowned architect, Frank Lloyd Wright.

The whole campus was commissioned by the relatives of the Johnson Wax Foundation family – a storied, Wisconsin-grown company. Their contributions to the Racine area are many and noteworthy.

The school has dedicated itself to the expensive work of caring for these historical buildings. Architectural tourists from as far away as Japan travel regularly to visit the campus.

Please help increase public awareness of these noteworthy accomplishments at The Prairie School in time for its 60th birthday next year. They more than deserve to be designated to those who travel and visit Wisconsin along I-94. Please support SB 584.

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian
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Christian Schools
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Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

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Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
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South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference
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Wisconsin Evangelical
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Testimony of Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen
Before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
February 6, 2024

Re: Senate Bill 584, relating to erecting highway signs for The Prairie School in Racine County.

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk, and members of the committee for your consideration of the department's input on Senate Bill 584, relating to erecting highway signs for The Prairie School in Racine County.

This bill requires WisDOT to install and maintain two directional signs along eastbound and westbound I-94 at the CTH K interchange in Racine County for The Prairie School. Senate substitute amendment 1 to Senate Bill 584 adds the "Wind Point Lighthouse" language to the sign as well.

The department has the primary responsibility to develop, maintain, and operate a state trunk highway system designed to move traffic from one destination to another in a safe, efficient, and expeditious manner. Erecting and maintaining highway traffic signs on the state highway system, including the interstate is a part of this responsibility. The primary function of traffic control signs is to warn, regulate, and guide traffic. The sign that Senate Bill 584 is requesting is a traffic generator sign – a supplemental sign used to provide drivers with information regarding special points of interest that attract large numbers of people.

WisDOT is required to follow the Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). WisDOT develops policies based on the MUTCD and other national signing guidelines as well as a motorist's ability to comprehend and process information at high speeds on freeways.

At freeway interchanges WisDOT provides signage that is directly related to the primary purpose of the interchange. Supplemental signing for traffic generators is considered a secondary need. Overall, space for signs on the interstate and at interchanges in the state is limited, and some have no space available for additional supplemental traffic generator signs.

WisDOT policy on supplemental traffic generator sign placement to destinations is - *limited to the nearest freeway, would not require travel on the crossroad beyond another state highway or through a community, and meets other qualifying criteria (e.g., distance from the interchange, annual attendance numbers).*

Further, signing on the interstate for K-12 schools is not allowed, as there are more K-12 schools than there is space for signs on the interstate.

WisDOT's policy prevents duplicative signing on the state highway system, it allocates space to qualifying traffic generators/destinations and ensures proper sign placement (e.g., signed at the closest point to get to a location). This assures WisDOT can manage and maintain supplemental signing that is beneficial to motorists traveling on the interstate.

Due to the limited space available at this specific interchange, if the bill passes the installation of signs would result in no future space for signs in the eastbound direction and leave limited space westbound for other qualifying traffic generators or destinations.

WisDOT appreciates the interest in signing for The Prairie School and Wind Point Lighthouse, however, there are other signing programs intended to guide motorists to various businesses, services, or activities. WisDOT would suggest exploring the option of community wayfinding signing on the local system.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this written testimony today. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.