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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 38

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

May 6, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members, thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 38 — personalized registration plate fees for gold star family special registration plates.

This legislation came to my attention from a constituent of mine in the 5th Senate District who lost their son in action defending our freedom.

Gold Star license plates are special group license plates that honor the immediate family of a service member killed in the line of military duty. SPC Chad Derek Coleman was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2010. Like many Gold Star families, his father Brian personalizes the family's Gold Star license plate, and is annually charged a \$15 fee to do so.

The Gold Star plate is considered a special group plate; it is exempt from the special registration fee for these plates. However, the additional personalization fee must still be paid if a family wishes to personalize the plate. This bill enacts language to make sure that a family that has already paid the ultimate price of the loss of a loved one in service to our country need not pay for a personalized plate honoring their family member.

Currently, **there are 456 active Gold Star license plates on the road, and 276 were personalized plates (this represents 60% of all Gold Star plates).** Based on the current 276 personalized plates the fiscal impact would be \$4,140 (276 x \$15.00). If each family who purchased a Gold Star plate choose to personalize, the fiscal impact would be \$6,840.

While the cost to the state is minimal, it sends a message of gratitude and support to the families of those who sacrificed everything and a reminder of those we can never thank enough.

In closing, this legislation is one more way for the state to recognize the ultimate sacrifice given by Veterans and their families in defense of our country. Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask for your support of Senate Bill 38.



CHUCK WICHGERS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 84th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

May 6, 2025

Senate Bill 38

Good afternoon Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 38. I am happy to author this bipartisan legislation with Senator Hutton.

The sacrifices our service men and women make go beyond words. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. One way the State of Wisconsin honors fallen heroes is through a Gold Star license plate. Immediate family members of a person who has died while serving in the US armed forces are eligible for this special group license plate.

Specialist (SPC) Chad Coleman was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2010. In honor of that ultimate sacrifice, his family can receive a Wisconsin Gold Star Family license plate in his remembrance. Under current law, gold star special registration plate holders still pay the general registration fee of \$85 for an automobile, but are not assessed the special registration fee for the plate. Generally, special registration fees can range from \$5 dollars for an Antique Plate to \$15 dollars, to \$25 for additional donations such as, for example, the Suicide Prevention or Choose Life special plates. To personalize any of these plates, there is an additional charge of \$15 dollars. Again, while there is no issuance fee for a Gold Star plate, there is still a \$15 fee for personalization.

Making this change to state law and eliminating the personalization charge for Gold Star Families is one small way we can acknowledge the sacrifice that families have made for the freedoms we cherish. Mr. Coleman's question is mine: "Haven't we paid enough already?"

Thank you for listening, and for your consideration of Senate Bill 38.