



---

# RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation*

*Representative Rachael Cabral-Guevara*

*July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

Hello, Chairman Mursau and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today on AB 375.

Visiting national parks is an exciting endeavor, especially for kids.

Every Kid Outdoors was created so fourth graders and their families could discover wildlife, resources, and history for free. With this program, fourth graders and family members gain access to over 2,000 federal lands and waters. While Every Kid Outdoors provides fourth graders free access to national parks, this bill would open up the opportunity for those same students to visit Wisconsin's state parks in the same way they are able to visit national parks. With no cost to students or parents, this bill creates a unique opportunity for each individual fourth grader in Wisconsin to develop crucial connections to public lands that will inspire a new generation of conservationists.

In AB 375, fourth grade students in Wisconsin will be able to have 1 full year of free access to Wisconsin's state parks which begins each year on September 1 and goes through August 31. To obtain a pass, it's as easy as going to the Every Kid Outdoors website, completing a few short educational activities, and then printing out a paper voucher to bring with for every public visit. This change will allow Wisconsin to take a step forward by providing this unique opportunity to our kids.

Thank you again for your time. I am hopeful you are able to support this bi-partisan piece of legislation.



MELISSA AGARD  
STATE SENATOR

**Senator Melissa Agard: Testimony on 4<sup>th</sup> Grade State Parks Pass (AB 375)**

Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

July 7, 2021

Thank you Chairman Mursau and committee members for allowing me to testify in support of Assembly Bill 375 before you today.

I have been the proud, lead author of this bill along with Senator Cowles since the 2015 legislative session. I hope that this version of the bill will continue in that same bipartisan spirit.

This legislation provides an exciting opportunity for 4th-grade students as they learn about the state of Wisconsin in the classroom, to experience our state parks with their families. In Wisconsin we cherish our outdoor heritage. That is why this bill honors our state's values and traditions.

Having taken my four sons around Wisconsin to state parks and around the country to national parks, I know the impact that visiting our parks can have on our youth. I have seen the wonder in their eyes as they experience the majesty of the outdoors. I have seen my sons becoming whole as they engage with nature.

And I have seen my boys at their happiest when we are together in the beautiful open spaces that Wisconsin is home to. I want every family in Wisconsin to be able to enjoy our 66 state parks, state forests and other state recreational areas.

It is my hope that this bill will cause that spark for future generations, a moment that creates a lifelong love of the outdoors. And let's remember that kids need to be outdoors. Getting outside has countless physical and mental health benefits.

Sadly, the typical American childhood has moved indoors. In an average week, only 6 percent of children ages 9-13 play outside on their own and kids 8 to 18 spend an overwhelming 53 hours a week using entertainment media. Studies show that children who spend time in nature regularly become better stewards of the environment and are generally in better health.

Creating a program that will incentivize children and families to get outside is a great step in fostering a healthy conservation ethic and a healthier Wisconsin. This is about access and opportunity.

While so many everyday families are struggling just to get ahead this program will help provide access to all state public lands. And give the opportunity for every family in Wisconsin to see our amazing natural spaces. I am confident that, through this legislation, we can help engage and create our next generation of park visitors, supporters and advocates.



## Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

### *2021 Assembly Bill 375*

### *Fee waivers for state park vehicle admission receipts to pupils with Every Kid Outdoors passes July 7, 2021*

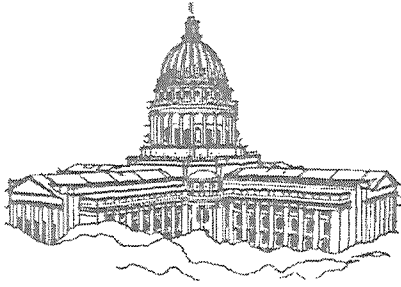
Good afternoon Chair Mursau and members of the Committee. My name is Diane Brusoe, and I am the Deputy Administrator for the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 375 (AB 375), related to fee waivers for state park vehicle admission receipts to pupils with Every Kid Outdoors passes.

The Every Kid Outdoors program administered by the National Park Service is designed to help increase access to the outdoors. Last year, the state park system saw over 21 million visitors across more than 100 properties. By allowing visitors a free admission, this bill could inspire many to purchase either an annual pass or future daily passes to continue to visit these properties.

Under AB 375, the department would waive admission fees needed to enter a State Park for pupils with a valid Every Kid Outdoors pass issued by the National Park Service. Other fees such as overnight camping fees and shelter reservation fees would still apply. Surrounding states such as Minnesota and Michigan do not currently accept Every Kid Outdoors passes, but some states do accept this pass. The bill would have minimal effects on administrative procedures and management. DNR Parks and Forest staff would manage this similarly to Federal Ice Age Reserve properties where the National Park Pass is accepted. Participants show their National Park pass and receive a free daily pass for entrance to those properties. Free admission typically results in higher visitation at many of the properties.

The department supports efforts to increase public access to the many outdoor recreation activities available in our state. It is important to keep the self-funded model of our State Park System in mind to ensure our continued ability to provide the best outdoor recreation experience for our visitors.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



# LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Written Testimony of Sen. Lena Taylor**  
**Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation**  
**Public Hearing - AB 375/SB 376**

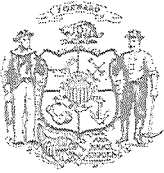
Chair Mursau, Vice-Chair Krug and members of the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation, thank you for today's public hearing on AB 375 regarding fee waivers for state park vehicle admission receipts to pupils with Every Kid Outdoors passes.

The Every Kid Outdoors program was created for all the right reasons. While the immediate goal focused on providing 4<sup>th</sup> graders the opportunity to visit national parks, historic structures, cultural artifacts, ancient forests, etc. at no cost, the broader goal of building the next generation of public lands supporters, advocates and visitors is something that every state could get behind. However, as with most things, the devil is in the details.

In attempting to create new opportunities for Wisconsin youth, we realize that financial barriers can continue to be a factor in youth and their families accessing these activities. Even the National Park Foundation, which is the official charity of America's national parks, realized that without transportation assistance, the free passes could be useless. In response, they developed transportation grants to assist schools facing budgetary concerns.

AB 375/SB 376 is a bill aimed at improving access issues connected to Wisconsin's Every Kid Outdoors pass holders. In providing fee waivers for the annual admission sticker for vehicles, that show proof of purchase upon entrance, we reduce one less obstacle to take advantage of such an amazing program.

It's a simple fix that can serve as a long-term investment in creating patrons and supporters of our state's park system. I hope you will join me in supporting this proposed legislation. Thank you in advance for your consideration.



**ANDRÉ JACQUE**

STATE SENATOR • 1<sup>ST</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
Senator André Jacque  
July 7, 2021*

Chair Mursau and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 375, which would expand the Every Kid Outdoors program to Wisconsin's state parks. I regret that I am not able to appear in person today.

Every Kid Outdoors is a federal public lands youth initiative started by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2015 to expand access for all 4<sup>th</sup> graders and their families to be able to experience the places that are home to our country's natural treasures and rich history. The program gives 4th graders and their families 1 year of free access to national parks. Since the program was created, several states have begun to accept these passes at their state parks as a way to introduce new people to their state park system. Assembly Bill 375 will establish the same opportunity in Wisconsin to further encourage interest in the lifelong fun, exercise and adventures possible in our state parks.

Most 4th graders are already registered by their teachers for the national program, and for those who are not, sign up is quick and easy through the program's website. Should Wisconsin choose to accept these passes at state parks, there would be no separate applications to handle.

This proposed policy change was emphatically endorsed during the DNR and Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearing earlier this year by a vote of 8,727 to 775, or roughly 92% in support, garnering significantly more votes in favor than any other question put before all state residents. I am pleased that this legislation has strong bi-partisan co-sponsorship including 6 members of this committee, and is formally supported by the Sierra Club of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 375.