

Sen. Marklein: Marklein Bill for children working at family-owned businesses heard today

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MADISON – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) testified with Curtis Eberle, owner of the Mixing Bowl Bakery in Sauk City, before the Senate Committee on Labor & Regulatory Reform today to support a bill that would align laws related to children working in their family’s business with agriculture.

Senate Bill (SB) 420 would allow a minor to be employed without a child labor permit if they are working at a business owned by their parents, guardians or grandparents. Current child work permit exemptions already exist for: agricultural work; domestic employment, work in or around a private home (such as babysitting or yard work), volunteer work for a non-profit agency and work through the Youth Apprenticeship Program.

Similarly, Federal law also exempts children of any age from child labor minimum age requirements if they are employed in a family business, with some exceptions for hazardous occupations.

“The need for this legislation was brought to me by the Eberle family, who own a local bakery, the Mixing Bowl Bakery in Sauk City. Last year, a customer filed a complaint with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) that several of their children were working in the bakery – clearing dishes, washing tables, making change and other small tasks,” Marklein said. “Curtis and Vicki Eberle were investigated and told that their children could not work at the bakery without a work permit. Since most of them are fairly young, they do not qualify for a work permit.

Thus, none of the Eberle's children are allowed to help at the bakery anymore."

"Some of the best lessons a child can learn take place when they are working alongside their parents. Farm-kids are some of the hardest workers with the best work ethic. I learned many skills on our family farm: responsibility, problem solving and pride in a job well done," Marklein said. "Under current law, a minor does not need a work permit to work on the family farm. A family-business should be treated the same."

"Our oldest son has a great work ethic now because he started helping out at the bakery when he was young," Eberle said. "He will be 12 in December. Had we waited to teach these lessons, we would have lost valuable time for learning."

"When our children helped in the bakery, they wore hair nets, gloves and aprons. They washed their hands," Eberle said. "We still have standards and we must follow the laws to maintain our license."

SB 420 maintains all other minor employment protections. Current law protects children by prohibiting them to be employed in any place that is dangerous to their health, safety, or welfare or where the employment may be dangerous. There are also additional protections and limitations on what hours minors can work.

As drafted, the bill would only eliminate the work permit requirement for minors ages 12-16 that work at a family business. Marklein plans to introduce an amendment to insure there would be no age minimum for children to help their family's private businesses. This would align Wisconsin statutes similarly to agriculture and federal law.