



PRESS RELEASE

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Proposal to Increase Rural WI's Dental Workforce Has a Hearing

Rep. Kurtz and Sen. Testin Move Ahead with Legislation to Improve Rural Dental Access

Madison, WI – A proposal in the state legislature that would improve access to rural dental care will have a hearing in the Assembly Committee on Health this week. The bill, which is authored by Rep. Tony Kurtz (Wonewoc) and Sen. Patrick Testin (Stevens Point), would create a scholarship program at the Marquette University School of Dentistry (MUSOD) - Wisconsin's only dental school - for students who agree to provide dental service in a Wisconsin rural dental health professional shortage area (DHPSA). Graduates would be required to provide service for eighteen months for every twelve months they took the scholarship.

"There's a lot of evidence that people will remain in an area once they are established in their profession," said Rep. Kurtz. "This bill will help attract dentists to our area, where they can ensure that our friends and neighbors have access to the care that we all need."

An amended version of the bill had been included in the legislature's budget proposal, but was vetoed by Governor Evers. Senator Testin said that he is hoping for a different outcome with the standalone bill.

"This bill has co-sponsors from both parties; it's a bi-partisan, commonsense bill that will help people in rural areas across Western and Central Wisconsin," said Sen. Testin. "I think that improving rural dental access is a goal we should all be able to get behind."

The bill, which is co-authored by Rep. Jesse James (Altoona) and Sen. Tom Tiffany (Minocqua) is a priority of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative – a group of legislators committed to bridging the gap between rural and urban areas. For more information, please visit www.RuralWisconsinInitiative.com.

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