



State Senator  
**Rick Gudex**

District 18

October 10, 2013

To: The Senate Committee on Economic Development and Local Government  
From: Sen. Rick Gudex  
Re: **Senate Bill 331**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing this bill today.

There are two sides to the jobs coin: first, businesses who need skilled workers but can't find them; second, workers or potential future workers who want steady, secure work but who may not know precisely how to attain that.

This bill takes a small step toward helping both those groups.

**Under this bill**, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will confer with the Department of Workforce Development and the technical colleges to identify the jobs and skills that are needed, or will soon be needed, particularly regarding entry level positions.

DPI will then approve "industry-recognized certification programs" that address those needs – they already have a long list of available programs, and there are very likely a lot more out there. School districts can then make those programs available to their students. For every student who completes a certification program and then graduates, the district will receive a \$1,000 grant.

Everybody wins: local businesses get more available skilled workers, who may be available for part-time work and internships even before graduation. Students get some real-life experience and career skills. Schools get to help their students prepare for life after school, and get a little more money for their efforts.

Thank you for your attention to this simple and bipartisan bill. We urge your support.

**Senate Committee Economic Development and Local Government  
October 10, 2013**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony  
on 2013 Senate Bill 331**

I want to thank Chairperson Gudex and committee members for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Sharon Wendt and I am the director of the Career and Technical Education Team at the Department of Public Instruction. On behalf of State Superintendent Tony Evers I am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 331 (SB331).

State Superintendent Evers first proposed these career and technical education (CTE) incentive grants as part of his 2013-15 biennial budget request in September 2012, and the department is pleased to see it moving forward now as separate legislation with bipartisan support.

SB 331 would provide \$3,000,000 GPR in FY15 to establish a new incentive program that encourages school districts to increase the number of pupils graduating high school with an industry recognized credential in key occupations designated as being in highest need of additional skilled workers. Industry certifications provide on-going information on the extent to which students are attaining the necessary knowledge and skills for entry into and advancement in post-secondary education and careers in their chosen career pathway. Superintendent Evers supports efforts such as SB 331 to expand career pathways which help pupils to more quickly earn credentials to enhance their employability. In addition, this proposal augments DPI's on-going collaboration with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) to develop and implement Programs of Study in high skill, high wage, and high demand occupations.

In January 2012, Governor Walker created the Wisconsin College & Workforce Readiness Council to recommend policies and programs to further improve pupils' college and career readiness. The Council discussed a variety of measures, including designing shorter and less costly degree programs aimed at filling high-need positions, and expanding dual enrollment and

dual credit opportunities for high school pupils, allowing them to earn college and workforce training credits while in high school.

This CTE incentive grants program is similar to one recently implemented in the state of Kansas. The bill establishes an incentive for school districts to get pupils involved in CTE by giving districts \$1,000 for each pupil who graduates from that district with certain recognized CTE certificates. With the \$3,000,000 appropriation, it would fund grants to districts for up to 3,000 eligible graduates. The list of industries and occupations that are eligible for the incentive payments will be produced from a collaborative effort between staff at DPI, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and WTCS.

The department feels that passage of SB 331 would be a win for Wisconsin pupils, for schools, and for industry. High school pupils will have more options, and graduates completing the program will obtain real world knowledge and have a sought-after skill that industry really needs. They will have the ability to start a career right out of high school making a decent wage or to work during college to limit their debt. The incentive will give school districts an additional reason to encourage their pupils to seek CTE certification and to maintain investments in CTE programming, the relative spending on which has declined by 38 percent over the last 20 years. Wisconsin companies will also get a greater number of their needs met in more highly skilled workers.

The department supports SB 331 and encourages its passage and implementation. Thank you and we would be glad to answer any questions you may have.