September 24, 2019

**Assembly Committee on Workforce Development**

**RE: Rep. Dittrich Testimony on AB 72/SB 72** – requiring certain occupational areas to be included in the youth apprenticeship program

Good Afternoon…I would like to thank Chairman Petryk and the committee for taking up this important bill that seeks to further provide students with available training opportunities and help employers in filling hiring gaps in high-demand fields.

Assembly Bill 72 would expand the generally accepted career clusters to the full 16 categories, whereas the Department of Workforce Development currently sanctions only 11 of them, leaving out important areas including Business Management and Administration; Education and Training; Government and Public Administration; Human Services; and Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security.

As I am sure Senator Jacque will agree in his testimony, it is our hope that by including these categories, bringing us up to the full 16 career clusters, we can continue to help fill the career gaps in our workforce and give students more options to find fulfilling and meaningful careers where they can flourish in our state.

In a time where we are speaking to expanding our workforce and educational opportunities for our students, it is only logical that we increase information about these clusters. Not every student is seeking the same vocational outcomes when enrolling in school. In fact, our state’s technical colleges are seeing increased enrollment as students take other options than a traditional 4-year degree. However, too often they are unaware of the myriad options available to them.

By increasing information available to them, thus providing them additional career options, we are helping to move them down the road to self-determination, independence, and a skill set than can serve them well over the course of their career. We see no detriment in making information available and providing students with more choices to ensure their success.

According to the Wisconsin Policy Forum, we are facing a collision of an expansion of the retiree population due to the baby-boom generation and the decline in our state’s youth population; surely we will face increased workforce and economic challenges in coming years. It is all the more important to have our upcoming generations enter the workforce. It would be even more advantageous if they find jobs and careers that are fulfilling, allowing them to flourish, start families of their own, and become productive assets to our economy. AB 72 will make them aware of more options, and help them find a match for their aptitude and skill set.

While it is undeniable this bill will assist our students, it will also help businesses mold the next generation and their future workforce so they are able to work together, allowing both sides to work hand-in-hand. When government steps out of the way and allows the workforce and businesses to operate in a free-flow of information and ideas, we will see a stronger workforce and business climate which will benefit our state in the long-run.

Finally, I would like to thank the representatives from the Waukesha Business Alliance who will be testifying on this bill. I am excited to hear directly from our business community how this legislation has a much-needed, direct impact on the way they operate and adapt for future challenges.