



## PATRICK TESTIN STATE SENATOR

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# Sen. Testin's dental access bill signed into law

MADISON, Wis. – Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point) is proud his bill that helps increase access to dental care in the rural areas of Wisconsin has been signed into law.

Under SB 706, annual scholarships of \$30,000 will be provided to no more than 15 Wisconsin resident students who are enrolled at the Marquette University School of Dentistry and – after they graduate – agree to practice in a dental health professional shortage area.

“Businesses across Wisconsin are facing significant workforce challenges right now and the dental industry is certainly not immune,” Sen. Testin said. “Now that SB 706 is officially state law, we have laid the foundation for creating a pipeline of dentists to serve Wisconsin's rural and underserved communities.”

According to the state Department of Health Services, close to 50 of Wisconsin's 72 counties are federally designated as dental health professional shortage areas, including Wood, Jackson, Adams, Waushara, Monroe and Portage counties.

Data from the 2020 Wisconsin Dentist Workforce Report shows that 30 percent of dentists will be leaving the profession over the next five years.

“We need to find ways to entice more dental providers to establish their practices in our underserved communities so the residents there do not fall behind on their oral health care,” Sen. Testin said. “It's quite shocking how expensive dental school can be and oftentimes students graduate with massive amounts of debt. These scholarships will go a long way toward incentivizing and supporting the recruitment and training of dentists who are willing to work in the underserved areas of our state.”

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