

Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations
March 4, 2015

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony on Assembly Bill 37

Good morning, Representative Swearingen. Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 37 (AB 37) relating to food safety practice in schools. My name is Dee Pettack, and I am the Legislative Liaison at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I am joined today by Jessica Sharkus from our School Nutrition Team at DPI. We are here to testify for information on AB 37.

AB 37 extends the requirement to obtain a Food Protection Practice Certificate to school food programs that participate in the National School Lunch Program. The bill would require that school food service programs have at least one member on staff who holds a valid certificate of food protection practices issued by the Department of Health Services.

This addition is in line with current practice at 75 percent of all schools participating in the program. Currently, 2,059 out of the 2,740 school sites report that they have a food service employee at the site that is ServSafe certified or the equivalent.

Under current law, if a school contracts with a third party vendor or a licensed vendor to do their school lunch program, those programs must have at least one member holding the certificate of food protection practices. Wisconsin currently has 89 public and private school districts that contract for their school lunch program.

AB 37 would not apply to approximately 23 schools in our state that do not participate in the National School Lunch Program. Given the importance this bill raises--protecting children in our schools from food borne illness--it is unclear why this bill would limit the certificate requirement only to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program and not all schools.

DPI is committed to the utmost food safety standards in our schools. Food borne illnesses put children at risk for serious illness and could lead to a loss of learning time in the classroom and could create potential liability costs for schools. DPI concurs with the authors of AB 37; it provides a simple approach to promoting food safety and ensuring the safe storage, preparation, and serving of school meals.

Thank you Chairman Swearingen and committee members for your time today, we are happy to answer any questions you may have.