

**Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations  
May 6, 2015**

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bill 194**

Good afternoon, Representative Swearingen. Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 194 (AB 194) requiring the successful completion of a civics exam as a condition of graduation. My name is Dee Pettack, and I am the Legislative Liaison at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

AB 194 requires the successful completion (60/100 correct answers) of the civics portion of a citizenship test as a condition for obtaining a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma. The requirement would apply to students at public schools, charter schools, and schools participating in the state's voucher program.

Under current law, Wisconsin has no single test that is used as a requirement for graduation. The state also does not mandate graduation requirements for private schools. Moving in this direction should be approached with caution, and anything crafted must have a research base and consider our most vulnerable students. DPI has the following concerns about creating a high stakes test as a requirement for a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma:

- The bill contains no exceptions for special education students who take alternative exams.
- The bill contains no exceptions for students who are new to the country, are here on visas, or have limited English skills.
- This bill does not provide any additional funding for school districts to account for the additional materials or professional development needed to prepare students for this high stakes exam.
- The bill does not clarify how the department is to procure and deploy the test.

The department believes that a deep knowledge of civics is critical in graduating students that are career and college ready. However, this push for an additional required assessment is coming at the same time as we are engaged in an important discussion about amount of time students spend preparing for and taking tests required by the state and federal government in addition to those selected by individual school districts.

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