

Senate Committee on Education
February 13, 2014

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony on 2013 Senate Bill 589

Thank you to Chairman Olsen and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Bob Soldner and I am the Director of the School Financial Services Team at the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to today on behalf of State Superintendent Tony Evers to testify in support of Senate Bill 589 (SB 589).

SB 589 would provide additional flexibility for school districts as they schedule their calendars while keeping in statute a minimum number of hours all school districts are required to offer regular instruction.

This flexibility is something school districts have repeatedly requested. In fact, the requirement for school to be held for 180 days is the most common waiver proposal the department receives from school districts every year.

Additionally, the department has received inquiries from some schools who would like to move to a year round calendar to address academic needs. A major barrier to this has been the realization that this would result in an inability to provide interim session courses due to a lack of state aid. This bill would fix that problem and thus provide schools and districts with another scheduling option moving forward. I should note that there may need to be an amendment to clarify the definition of interim session in the bill, but we are working with Senator Olsen on that and hope to have it fixed shortly.

Finally, this bill would provide a solution in how to treat online classes for purposes of summer school, and now interim session, in state statute. School districts have in the past wanted to offer online or blended learning opportunities and the department has been unable to recognize those classes for aid purposes. This bill will allow us to do so and, as a result, create additional options for the delivery of instruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.