



Tuesday, April 4, 2023

Assembly Committee on Agriculture

Re: Assembly Bill 131: Relating to: membership in county land conservation committees.

Michelle Ramirez-White – Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union

Chair Tranel and members of the committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 131.

Wisconsin Farmers Union submits testimony today in favor of Assembly Bill 131, relating to membership in county land conservation committees. Our members believe removing the requirement to appoint a person from the US Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency, and replace them with a person engaged in 'agricultural use', will provide more opportunities for those actively engaged in agriculture.

In the past, it was common for farmers to participate on county boards, but today these boards look different. As fewer and fewer farmers are able to dedicate this time to serve as board members, it makes sense for our current law to update and allow more flexibility of agricultural presence.

It is very important for qualified people with agriculture backgrounds to be in these committees, to provide valuable and accurate input when agricultural issues arise.

Assembly Bill 131 keeps the original intent of this seat on county conservation committees, which is to ensure agriculture is represented and has an active voice in conservation and land use matters.

Wisconsin Farmers Union would support further clarifying "agricultural use" as a person engaged in active farming, who would meet the requirements to be an FSA member. It is vital this representative be someone who lives with the rules and regulations being discussed and uses farming to make a living.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Wisconsin Farmers Union's thoughts on this issue.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ramirez-White

Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union