



Tuesday May 23rd, 2023

Assembly Committee on Transportation

Re: Assembly Bill 244: Relating to: an agricultural roads improvement grant program and making an appropriation.

Michelle Ramirez-White – Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union

Chair VanderMeer and members of the committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 244.

Wisconsin Farmers Union's grassroots, member-driven policy reads:

“Local roads are the backbone for Wisconsin commerce and industry, stimulate growth and promote a healthy economy. The percentage of state transportation funds devoted to local road projects is shrinking. The overall size of the state Transportation Fund is also shrinking because motorists are driving less, driving more fuel efficient cars, buying fewer gallons of gasoline and paying less in gasoline taxes. Local governments are subject to tight levy limits on local levies, and state shared revenue has been cut for local governments, which further restricts the local governments’ ability to fund local road maintenance. For these reasons, Wisconsin Farmers Union supports a general fund for increasing funding for road projects”

Wisconsin Farmers Union submits testimony today in favor of Assembly Bill 244, relating to the agricultural roads improvement grant program. This state-funded program to upgrade local roads and bridges, improves the critical link between farmers and business.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is an organization of farmers and rural residents, and thus many of our members rely on rural roads, while this bill would address one of the biggest hurdles farmers face, it would benefit all rural road users.

Crumbling and aging infrastructure in rural Wisconsin results in weight or hauling restrictions, and alternative route or partial load requirements. These issues are currently exasperated by driver shortages and higher fuel prices. This restricts Wisconsin's \$107 billion a year agriculture industry. These infrastructure problems contribute to a strain on our food supply.

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

Sincerely,

Michelle Ramirez-White Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union