



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government

FROM: Marcie Rainbolt, Government Affairs Associate

DATE: February 7, 2018

SUBJECT: Opposition to Assembly Bill 748

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is opposed to Assembly Bill 748 (AB 748), which makes numerous changes to local government's ability to regulate various aspects of employment matters, resulting in a loss of local control over those activities in the best interests of the community. WCA understands the desire to reduce regulatory oversight of business in Wisconsin; however, restricting a county's ability to regulate employment matters would negatively impact certain local industries by reducing the quality of a given workforce and impacting the quality of services delivered.

Under AB 748, local ordinances must strictly conform to statewide standards in various aspects of employment regulation. This provision applies a one-size-fits-all approach to local regulation and fails to account for varying features unique to individual counties. These unique features necessitate regulations beyond the minimum state standards. Restricting a county's ability to regulate community-specific issues within its borders would significantly impact a county's ability to increase economic growth through competitive work conditions and the quality of work delivered.

The WCA is concerned that counties would be prohibited from regulating employee hours and overtime, employee benefits, and employment discrimination because these employment issues may be very industry-specific in any given county. For example, counties whose livelihood depends on seasonal tourism have different needs in setting hours, benefits and other work conditions in order to attract and maintain the seasonal workforce. Without that workforce, the tourism industry in these counties would be severely restricted. Other industry-specific workforce needs include farming, mining and certain manufacturing operations such as timber and paper production. In other words, specific areas have specific regulatory needs that should be regulated by counties to ensure that area's continued growth. WCA requests amending AB 748 to ensure counties can continue to regulate these specific community and industry-based needs to sustain and grow local economies.

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In addition to these concerns, WCA and its member counties support local freedom to contract. Many counties impose contract conditions on their service providers in an effort to ensure safe and just working conditions for those individuals providing labor that benefits a county and its residents. Taking that local authority away would harm local businesses and local taxpayers.

WCA understands AB 748's intent of achieving state-wide consistency in employment regulation; however, WCA encourages the committee to understand the local needs of particular industries that are most efficiently regulated, in part, at the local level. While state-wide standards may be necessary, a county's ability to regulate industry specific needs should not be curtailed. A county's ability to regulate these local-industry needs will promote growth because the regulations will be targeted and specific based on local needs. This approach will provide consistency and fairness for both local governments and local taxpayers.

The WCA respectfully requests the committee reject AB 748 in its current form. Please feel free to contact WCA for further information.