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## **RURAL SCHOLARSHIP PROPOSAL FOR DENTAL STUDENTS 'A GREAT STEP FORWARD' IN HELPING RURAL WISCONSINITES ACCESS ORAL HEALTH CARE**

*Dr. Patrick Tepe, president of the Wisconsin Dental Association, today released the following statement regarding the proposed Marquette University School of Dentistry Rural Track Scholarship. The program, which would provide a scholarship to MUSoD dental students who agree to practice in a rural Wisconsin dental health professional shortage area (DHPSA) for up to six years after graduation, is included as part of the Rural Wisconsin Initiative introduced as LRB 2671 by Sen. Patrick Testin (R-Stevens Point), Rep. Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), and twenty one additional legislators.*

"Creating a rural track program for Wisconsin residents enrolled at the Marquette University School of Dentistry would be a great step forward in helping more Wisconsinites access oral health care. Workforce studies show that Wisconsin will have enough dentists to meet the state's needs for the foreseeable future; the challenge is that those dentists aren't always practicing in the areas that need them most. This program is designed to center a dental student's experience around rural practice, and to encourage young dentists to settle in underserved areas – it's a practical, effective and potential-filled approach to truly expand access to care in Wisconsin's rural communities.

"Our state has had similar programs in place for physicians and OB/GYNs for many years. Those programs have been extremely successful, and we believe a dental track would have similar, positive results.

"The WDA and its 3,100-plus members are dedicated to quality oral health care for every Wisconsin resident, and we are excited by the opportunities the proposed dental rural track scholarship presents. We thank the Rural Wisconsin Initiative's sponsors for bringing forth this important idea, and we encourage lawmakers to support this practical and much-needed solution for Wisconsin."

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*Established in 1870, the WDA's mission is to promote professional excellence and quality oral health care in Wisconsin. With over 70 percent of Wisconsin dentists being members, the Association is the leading voice for dentistry in the state. The WDA is affiliated with the American Dental Association - the largest and oldest national dental association in the world. For more information, call 414-276-4520, visit [WDA.org](http://WDA.org) and find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).*