September 25, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families

FROM: Ray Cross, UW System President

RE: Senate Bill 334 Testimony - For Information Only

Thank you, Chairman Kooyenga and committee members, for holding this public hearing on SB 334, and thank you to Representative Duchow and Senator Stroebel for authoring this bill to support students who are in active duty service.

We estimate that there are about 141 active duty service members who currently attend UW System institutions. We owe it to these students who are serving our state and country to provide access to a quality education, and to provide the necessary support to them so they can succeed. The UW System offers a variety of services and benefits to students who are in active duty service or who are veterans. In addition, every institution has staff that specialize in providing support to these students. Our institutions promote awareness of these services and encourage students to use them if they are in need.

SB 334 puts into state statute protections for students who are called into active military service for any period of time, not just for 30 days or more. The bill not only requires an institution to ensure students are provided a reasonable opportunity to complete final projects and exams, but it also gives students the option to receive reimbursement of tuition and fees paid for courses that they must withdraw from, instead of receiving an incomplete for the course. In addition, these students can receive a prorated reimbursement for room and board.

While many UW System institutions already have policies in place with similar protections, and in some cases additional protections, this language will provide consistency across all institutions in the UW System.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information on SB 334, and as a veteran myself, I appreciate any efforts to support those who are serving in our armed forces and attending our institutions to pursue their education.