

DATE: September 18, 2025

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Veteran and Military Affairs

FROM: Office of Government Relations for the Universities of Wisconsin

RE: Testimony for Information Only on Senate Bill 411

Thank you, Chair Jacque and committee members, for providing the Universities of Wisconsin (UWs) an opportunity to submit testimony for information only on Senate Bill 411 (SB 411).

The UWs, with 13 universities, have one of the most robust programs for veterans and service members in the country. We strive to provide a welcoming higher educational setting for service members, veterans, and their families. Each of our universities has a veteran service department that provides comprehensive support to veterans. Dedicated university staff assist veterans with transferring credits, navigating benefits, and connecting veterans with each other and the campus community. UWs are always looking at paths to make it easier and more accessible for veterans and service members to attend our universities.

The University of Wisconsin Missing-in-Action Recovery and Identification Project (UW MIA Project) consists of a multidisciplinary team of researchers, students, veterans, alumni, and volunteers working towards the recovery and identification of missing-in-action American service members in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Defense. Founded in 2015 at the UW-Madison Biotechnology Center, the project deploys a team of experts from across the Universities of Wisconsin with backgrounds in multiple academic disciplines including archeology, forensic anthropology, history, business management, and biology to perform site surveys and assist in the discovery, careful exhumation, identification, and repatriation of remains.

Currently, the UW MIA Project is funded through a mix of private gifts and federal grants. Because of this, we are unable to focus specifically on finding Wisconsinites because we are dependent upon the requirements of our outside funding sources. We have sought dedicated state funding for this project in past biennia so that the scope can be narrowed to finding and identifying missing Wisconsin service members.

SB 411 directs the Board of Regents of the Universities of Wisconsin (BOR) to allocate \$180,000 in each year of the biennium for this project, and that regents issue a report at the end of the biennium. While we agree with the intent of this legislation and appreciate the authors for recognizing the importance of the UW MIA Project, to ensure the project's continued success, we would need fiscal support from the state. Additionally, there are other portions of SB 411 that do not directly affect the Universities of Wisconsin.

Thank you again for providing the Universities of Wisconsin the opportunity to offer testimony on this legislation.