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To: Assembly Committee on Local Government
From: Curt Witynski, J.D., Deputy Executive Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: February 7, 2018
Re: AB 748, Prohibiting local governments from establishing minimum wage standards for their own employees or employees of contractors; and prohibiting local governments from creating a broader basis for employment discrimination than provided for by state law

The League of Wisconsin Municipalities opposes AB 748 for the following reasons:

1. The bill repeals language in current law allowing municipalities to require a different minimum wage rate for a) an employee of the municipality; b) an employee who performs work under a contract for the provision of services to the municipality; or c) an employee who performs work that is funded by financial assistance from the municipality.
2. The bill prohibits municipalities from enacting ordinances regulating employment discrimination.

These are two policy areas that should be left open to local home rule. Local elected officials are in the best position to make decisions regarding whether to differ from state law in these two matters based on the character, concerns, and values of their communities.

The wages paid to municipal employees, the employees of contractors doing work for a municipality, or the employees of non-profits receiving financial assistance from the municipality are primarily a matter of local concern and should lie outside of the state's ability to interfere. Municipalities understand that the minimum wage established by the state is uniform and must control in every community. However, state law wisely allows a community to adjust the minimum wage for their own employees or for the employees that work for a contractor that performs work for the municipality or for employees of an agency receiving a grant from the municipality. These exceptions should remain in place.

Similarly, communities should continue to have the flexibility to enact ordinances expanding upon the protected classes covered by the state's fair employment law. For example, the City of Appleton emphasizes that one of its fundamental values is being viewed as welcoming to all people. The mayor, common council, and staff view this as critical to being able to attract millennials and young families to settle in the Fox Valley. One of the ways Appleton has expressed this openness is by including in its ordinances a prohibition on discriminating against persons on the basis of gender identity and/or gender expression, which is currently not one of the protected class under the state's fair employment law. Communities should be able to expand upon the list of protected classes specified in the state's fair employment law if their residents demand it.

We urge you to vote against recommending passage of AB 748. Thanks for considering our comments.