



**DAN FEYEN**

**STATE SENATOR**

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To: The Assembly Committee on Workforce Development  
From: Sen. Dan Feyen  
Re: Assembly Bill 819

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

We all know Wisconsin has a worker shortage. Wisconsin has reached record unemployment this year, with some counties having rates as low as 2.1%. Businesses regularly report difficulties finding employees to fill positions.

However, with this challenge comes a great opportunity to explore opportunities to support populations that have been historically underemployed. Assembly Bill 819 seeks to better the systems we use to support disabled individuals in the workplace by allowing for integrated, co-worker support.

This legislation is based off of a pilot program that occurred in select counties throughout Wisconsin, including Dane County. It is noteworthy that by utilizing this model Dane County has achieved a greater than 70% disability employment rate in contrast to the statewide average of less than 10%. By training coworkers within businesses to offer supports to disabled individuals, the Partners with Business disability employment model reduces or eliminates the need for an outside job coach to be present in a private employer's facility. This reduces the cost of supporting a disabled individual and has proven to still deliver a satisfactory work experience for the employee and employer. I have distributed a document that breaks down the cost-savings and provides more details on the pilot program to each committee member.

Assembly Bill 819 provides a \$75,000 appropriation in fiscal year 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, totaling \$150,000, to the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities to scale the Partners with Business program to a state-wide model. While this may seem like a hefty monetary sum on the front end, I am confident that the cost savings and the improved employment outcomes associated with this model make this a worthy investment for the state.

Thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions you may have.

## Testing Partners with Business Statewide: A Successful and Efficient Model for Employing People with Disabilities

Dane County has achieved a much higher community employment rate for people with the most significant disabilities than other Wisconsin counties (over 70% versus less than 10%). This is, in part, due to the relationships that been developed with local employers through the successful implementation of the Partners with Business model of workplace supports. Can the Partners with Business model be expanded to improve employment rates for people with disabilities throughout Wisconsin?

In February 2017, the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities partnered with one high school and three non-profit organizations to establish and “test” the Partners with Business support model with twenty employers in Wisconsin. These collaborators, located in DeForest, Madison, Milwaukee and Hudson, represent a mix of Wisconsin’s urban, rural, and suburban communities. After just a few short months, we are seeing promising results, which could be replicated and expanded upon with further investment and technical assistance. Specifically, the technical assistance structure and time-limited investment included in LRB-1527 could help to scale the Partners with Business model statewide.

### Case Examples:

DeForest High School has developed Partners with Business relationships to support 5 students working for 6 employers. The employers include Walmart, All Stop, Rejuvenation Spa, A Growing Place Preschool, Kohls and Yahara Learning Center.

Four of the five students are being supported naturally by co-workers, with no reimbursement to the business from the school, vocational rehabilitation or long-term care program. The school staff check in with the business 1-2 times per month. These “natural” workplace supports from co-workers ***cost nothing*** for the public system (i.e. Schools, Vocational Rehabilitation and Medicaid). They are a result of the coaching and technical assistance the Partners with Business service provider has given the business to prepare the supervisors and co-workers to successfully employ and support a worker with disabilities.



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Partners with Business Technical Assistance to Employers results in more natural supports on the job, ***which costs the public system nothing.***

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Another student, Sophie, who was hired to work 40 hours per week at the Yahara Learning Center, is supported using another form of Partners with Business supports - called **Partners with Business Plus**. In this situation, the Partners with Business service provider (DeForest High School) worked with the employer to maximize natural supports from the supervisor and coworkers, which costs the state nothing. Because Sophie will need some extra support and coaching on the job – beyond what is typically provided by co-workers – the business is provided a reimbursement for co-workers to step in for short periods of time to provide her with the extra help needed. Regular check-in and back-up services from Partners with Business agency are available to ensure Sophie’s ongoing success. Without using the Partners with Business Plus model, the ongoing job supports for this student would cost the public system more. The chart below demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of the Partners with Business approach.

Traditional Agency or School Supports		Partners with Business Plus	
Number of job coaching hours per week (4x1 hour plus 30 minutes for transportation per visit)	6 hours	Co-worker paid supports needed per week	4 hours
Cost for job coach per hour	\$15 per hour plus benefits	Cost for employer to provide co-worker supports	\$15 per hour
Total weekly costs for job support	\$ 90 per week plus benefits	Total weekly reimbursement to employer for co-worker supports <sup>1</sup>	\$60 per week
Total annual support costs (37 weeks of employment) *	\$3,330 + benefits	Total annual support costs (37 weeks of employment) *	\$2,220

\*July 31, 2017 to June 8, 2018

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**Savings to the Public System with Partners with Business Plus = over \$1100 per year**

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<sup>1</sup> School funds are used to provide the reimbursement to the employer



DATE: January 30, 2018

TO: Assembly Committee on Workforce Development  
FROM: The Wisconsin Family Care Association

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 819, employment of individuals with disabilities enrolled in long-term care programs and making an appropriation.

Dear Chairperson Petryk and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 819, which would provide critical technical assistance funding and support to expand employment opportunities for individuals enrolled in Family Care and other long-term care programs.

The Wisconsin Family Care Association (WFCA) is comprised of Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) that contract with the State to administer one or more of Wisconsin's managed long-term care programs, including Family Care, Partnership and PACE.

Family Care provides Medicaid managed long-term care services and supports to more than 50,000 frail elders and people with physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities. Family Care members work as a team with a case manager and registered nurse to develop a care plan tailored to their specific needs and goals. As part of the care planning process, the member's care team actively discusses the individual's desires and goals related to work. These discussions also include outlining all of the opportunities to support the individual in meeting their employment goals. WFCA is committed to ensuring that Family Care members have the same employment opportunities as all citizens.

One of the biggest challenges to supporting Family Care members in achieving competitive employment is a lack of community and employer awareness of this underutilized workforce, particularly in rural areas of the state. AB 819 would help local businesses and MCOs to work together and develop the infrastructure needed to employ individuals with disabilities who want to work in the community. This will not only increase the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, but also build a stronger and more diverse workforce in Wisconsin.

WFCA believes this legislation is an important step in making sure that everyone who wants to work has that opportunity. We have attached several Family Care employment success stories.

We ask that you support Assembly Bill 819.

Thank you.

**Wisconsin Family Care Association**  
Community Care ■ Inlusa  
Independent Care Health Plan ■ Lakeland Care, Inc.  
My Choice Family Care

**Meet Linda.** She is a 58-year-old woman with a work ethic like no other. Linda is someone who enjoys work and takes a great deal of pride in the work she does. In fact, Linda enjoys work so much, she is upset when her schedule changes, or she misses a day of work due to a holiday falling within the work week. But the opportunity to work is not one that has always been available to Linda.

When Linda was 10, she went to live in an institution, where she stayed until 2002 when she moved to a six-bed CBRF with five others who resided with her in the institution. After moving into the CBRF, Linda started going to Opportunity Development Center (ODC) and has worked there successfully for many years. *But Linda wanted more.*

When it came to talking about community employment with Linda, there were a number of people who didn't believe Linda could work in the community, but we persisted with the belief that Linda had a lot to offer the workforce, and the right fit was out there.

The journey started with talking with Linda about working in the community. Inclusa collaborated with ODC to utilize a Self-Directed approach to finding a job that met what Linda was seeking, rather than the standard job development and placement process. This Self-Directed process allowed Linda the opportunity to select Kristin to help her explore, seek, and obtain her employment goals. Kristin and Linda started with an in-depth discovery process. In addition to a deeper discovery, Kristin and Linda sought different work trials in the community that were funded through Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Linda also had the opportunity to select who she wanted to support her on the job and selected her own job coach within the process. Linda found a fit that worked well for her at Mid-State Technical College, yet it is important to note that Mid-State felt equally satisfied with the fit, and after completion of her second work trial at Mid-State Technical College, Linda was offered a part-time position in the business office.

Linda is happily employed in a position that is right for her. She directed who she wanted to help her, fully participated in the discovery of what she was seeking, and selected the opportunities that got her closer to community employment. Linda is proof that hard work and individualized exploration can lead to successful employment outcomes. *She wanted more, and she got it.*

**Meet Nick.** Nick had been actively searching for new employment since the hotel he was working for abruptly went out of business almost two years ago. *Nick wanted more.* While working with a local supported employment provider agency, Nick and his job developer excitedly agreed to participate in the Flipped Job Fair that Lakeland Care, Inc. (LCI) hosted in April 2017 through a grant received from the Board for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD). Lakeland Care Inc.'s Flipped Job Fair showcased LCI members' abilities and skills that would benefit area businesses workforce needs. LCI invited local businesses to attend and to talk to and/or interview individuals to fill any job vacancies that their business had. Nick, along with 15 other LCI members, put together resumes, employment boards and practiced interviewing skills in advance so they would be ready for future employment.

A local employer, which operates a cleaning business, had a chance to sit down and talk with Nick to find out his employment desires and capabilities. After the Flipped Job Fair, Nick's job developer followed up with the employer to see if there was an opportunity for Nick to participate in a work experience with her company. Nick's job developer and the employer agreed that this could be a good opportunity for Nick, and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

agreed to fund the work experience. Nick started his work experience a short time later working 2-3 hours per day, 2-3 days a week. Midway through his work experience, the employer contacted the job developer to see if Nick would like to apply for a cleaning position within the company as she thought he was doing a very good job with his cleaning tasks. Nick applied for a job within the company and was hired on as a permanent employee. Nick uses the natural support of his co-workers, which means no additional job coaching support is needed. Nick currently works 3 hours per day, 3 nights a week with the cleaning service located in Fond du Lac, WI. *He wanted more, and he got it.*

**Meet Hannah.** She is a woman in her early twenties who is bubbly and social. Hannah had a job, and did well there, at a food establishment in town. After battling some serious health issues, Hannah decided the food industry was no longer in her employment sights. *Hannah wanted more.*

Hannah and her family set their sights on something more, and started with DVR. The initial discovery phase was funded by Inclusa but the other phases were supported fully within DVR. Even better, DVR funded through the competitive employment track and not the supported employment track as directed by Hannah and her family.

A referral was made, a meeting took place, and Hannah hired a guide to support her journey. With support, Hannah landed a work experience at a hair salon and loved it. She worked there for over a month, but unfortunately the opportunity for hire was not available, so the search continued. But the search came to a stop when it was noted that Hannah did not seem happy. This was her search, directed by her, and guided with help from others—but the fit didn't seem quite right, and things were moving slower than Hannah wanted. The guide Hannah hired was being mentored by GT Independence, but the personality differences were getting in the way. Hannah is a bubbly young woman and her guide was quiet; the people around Hannah knew the fit wasn't right. At a meeting with a GT Independence mentor, Hannah said "I don't want" but couldn't finish the sentence. The mentor asked if she was talking about working with the guide and Hannah was incredibly relieved, so the exploration of hiring a new guide began. This is an important part of Hannah's story. She is at the center of this journey, and she was able to steer it on a different course when it wasn't working for her; that is what Self-Directed exploration is all about: the person at the center, steering the ship.

Hannah hires a new guide, and they set to work on developing talking points so Hannah was equipped to tell potential employers her strengths and answer questions during an interview. A cheat sheet was created as a reference to help Hannah if she got stuck. Equipped with these new tools and help from her perfect-fit guide, Hannah applied for three jobs. In all three, she went in the front door and applied like every other job-seeker who enters through those doors. She was called back for interviews at all three places. Even better, she barely used her cheat sheet during her interviews because she had practiced and was prepared. She used some support during her online application and testing process, but Hannah remained at the center of her journey, and it paid off.

Hannah was offered a job at all three locations. She decided to try two of them. One employer, when offered the wage incentives through DVR, turned it down and shared, "I hired Hannah, and she is my employee, so I will pay her wage." The employer noted Hannah's desire to work and the specific skills and interests she had that matched the job.

At her other job, Hannah will be trained by Katie. Katie was the first successful hire in the Self-Directed Integrated Employment (SD/IE) process, and someone who used to have one-to-one job coaching, but is now laying the groundwork for others to succeed in a new role. (Double success!) If any long-term supports are needed in the future, they will be paid by Includa but the expectation is that there may be very little, if any, due to relationship being developed between Hannah and co-workers.

Hannah was in charge of the process with support. She was able to make changes when the guide wasn't right for her. She was able to enhance her voice and self-determination along the way. She enjoyed the job-seeking process with help from others, and is even more excited about the money she is earning to buy movies and do the things she enjoys doing.

Hannah is happily employed in not one, but two, positions that are right for her. She directed who she wanted to help her, advocated when something wasn't working for her, and selected the opportunities that got her closer to the job of her choosing. Hannah is proof that the right fit and individualized exploration can lead to successful employment outcomes. *She wanted more, and she got it.*

**Meet Tyler.** He is a young man who is resilient and motivated. Tyler is a high school graduate and has had a few jobs. For the last two years Tyler has been working at a job he really loved supported by a job coach from an agency. It was a seasonal position and he was getting ready to go back for the fall when the family was told by the agency that he wouldn't be returning to the position. He was not contacted by his employer at all. Per the agency it was an issue around his communication. Tyler is deaf, does not sign, read lips, or readily communicate which may have influenced the employer's decision to end the position. But Tyler was determined to find a position that suited him. *Tyler wanted more.*

Tyler needed to move beyond the traditional job placement he'd experienced in the past. He decided to explore the self-directed option to pursue his employment goals.

During the first meeting, after seeing the Discovery Packet on the table, Tyler started making a list of all the things he could do and liked to do. He was so motivated!

Tyler is working with an employment guide who is not afraid to talk to anyone. She and Tyler clicked immediately. The guide created some communication strategies for them to use and they worked. The guide was surprised that someone who had been in employment services for several years had no resume, so that was the first thing they worked on. They also established Tyler is also going to have an Assistive Technology assessment through DVR.

Tyler really wanted his old job back and didn't have any closure because the employer communicated to the agency rather than to Tyler, so it was difficult for him to consider any other workplace. When they saw an opening at his former workplace, he applied but was encouraged to keep looking and apply to other places, and Tyler agreed.

Right now Tyler and his guide are working on all the tasks he did at his former jobs, noting the things he liked, and using these as guideposts for finding new opportunities in the community for employment. What is important about this story, even though it is not yet complete, is that Tyler was not being supported to achieve his employment goals from the agency, his on the job supports, or his employer as he was removed from the center of the employment plan. There was no resume, no communication strategies in place, no relationships built; the "experts" had

failed Tyler. But when a guide was brought in who saw only Tyler's potential and motivation to succeed, together, they are working on Tyler's employment goals. *He wanted more, and he is going to get it.*





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Lisa Pugh, State Director  
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arcwi.org

January 30, 2018

To: Representative Petryk, Chair  
Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development

From: Lisa Pugh, Executive Director

Re: Assembly Bill 819, Partners with Business

Position: Support AB 819

The Arc Wisconsin is a statewide organization that advocates for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). We have 15 local chapters across the state.

Partners with Business is a bill that literally can help businesses and workers with disabilities in all areas of the state.

Our colleagues in Dane County are leading the nation with this model of employment supports for people with disabilities. They have proven that the Partners with Business bill:

1. Is a Win for Businesses: it gets them reliable workers and increases their productivity;
2. Provides supports for workers with disabilities that are effective and business friendly;
3. Saves scarce Government resources; in Dane County alone the model saves an estimated 50% when compared to traditional government supports provided to a worker with a disability.

The point about saving government resources is key here because in this building we hear all the time that Medicaid costs too much. Partners with Business is a tried and true cost-savings solution that gets people to work earning money and paying taxes as well as reduces their need for government funded employment supports.

I have met many workers with disabilities and employers who are successfully using Partners with Business. Russell is a friend of mine who works in an office. He started out with a job coach trying to support him; that job coach had no computer skills and could not even work the copier. Sometimes the job coaches would have to leave early or would come late. This was not helpful as Russell was trying to learn his job and become an effective worker. It was not helping the business get their work done. Russell's employer

decided to try Partners with Business which helps a co-worker learn how to naturally coach an employee with disabilities. After some initial support for the business and co-worker to learn how to make accommodations and provide reminders that Russell could follow, he became one of the businesses most reliable workers and has developed a great friendship with his colleague coach. Russell would have been eligible for ongoing government funded daily job coaching, but that is no longer necessary. His supports have been reduced to an occasional check in every few months.

This bill will provide the support to allow more Wisconsin businesses to learn what Russell's employer has learned and help both the employer and employee to be successful.

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities has funded small Partners with Business projects statewide to test the model and collect important data. They have developed the expertise and have proven that Partners with Business can work with all sorts of employers in rural, suburban and urban communities across Wisconsin.

The goal of this bill is to allow any willing entity - including private businesses, schools, Family Care care management organizations, IRIS agencies, and employment services providers - to be coached in this model and support more hiring of people with disabilities.

The bill will expand awareness and competence across the private sector in hiring individuals with significant disabilities, who are often those who cost the most to support in our public system of long-term care. Dane County has proven that these individuals can be employed and earn typical wages that help them contribute to their own care and often pay taxes.

The best part of this bill is there is accountability to success. There is required reporting on the number of people with disabilities hired, their wages and hours worked, with an expectation that the project will result in a reduction in public spending on government funded employment supports by a minimum of 25 percent compared to traditional costs.

This bill is a great example of public-private partnership and how government supports can work more effectively for people. The Arc Wisconsin hopes you will support this legislation!

## **Partners with Business AB-819**

Hello my name is Russell McCullough and I live in Madison. I have four jobs. I have a job coach through Partners with Business at one of my jobs.

1. It's better to have someone from work help you at work then to have a job coach come in and disrupt you.
2. If I'm struggling with something I always have someone to ask for help.
3. I've also noticed its more efficient because I can get help and don't have to wait for my job coach to come in.

Please support the passage of this bill. Thank you.

Russell McCullough

To: Representative Warren Petryk, Chair, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development  
Members, Assembly Committee on Workforce Development

From: Disability Rights Wisconsin, Amy Devine, Public Policy Coordinator

Date: January 30, 2018

Re: Testimony in support of AB 819, employment of individuals with disabilities enrolled in long-term care programs and making an appropriation

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is the designated Protection and Advocacy system for Wisconsinites with disabilities. DRW is charged with protecting and enforcing the legal rights of individuals with disabilities, investigating systemic abuse and neglect, and ensuring access to supports and services so that all Wisconsinites can learn, work, and live full lives in our communities free of abuse, neglect, and discrimination.

DRW supports AB 819 and the Partners with Business model as this model will help people with disabilities maintain jobs with natural supports in their employment. This bill will support the Partners with Business model, a model that is already working in various parts of the state, and which can help train and support employers better support their employees. Employers have shared this model is working for them and that they want to not only just hire people with disabilities but also support and retain them as employees. Schools and transition programs are also working hard across the state to develop good relationships with employers in their community and this bill will build upon the work already being done there. Disability Rights Wisconsin supports this bill because it will expand opportunities for people with disabilities to maintain steady employment and will help expand this program to other parts of the state for people with disabilities.

Maintaining Employment

Unfortunately, unemployment rates for people with disabilities remain high. As of December 2017, the labor force participation rate for all people with disabilities is 21% while the rate for people without disabilities is 68%. It is our hope this bill will increase employment for people with disabilities.

Many people with disabilities utilize job coaches in their places of employment. Job coaching supports are frequently required by people with disabilities in order to start a job successfully and to have enough time with that coach to establish the client's work routine and tasks. As time goes on, usually after about 90 days, the coach moves on to help another person. This leaves the previous client without supports after the 90 days of coaching end.

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We often see people with disabilities lose jobs under two typical scenarios once they no longer have a job coach. First, the employee will often have new tasks assigned to them but without the supports on the job to learn those new skills. Second, a new manager or supervisor is hired and may require the individual to perform tasks in a different way. However, there is no one trained to work with the employee with a disability on how to perform these tasks differently. Without these supports, the employee with a disability loses their job.

Workforce Shortage

Job coaches are necessary but not always available, even though job coaches work weekdays, nights, and weekends. Especially in rural parts of the state, we hear that there are not enough people to fill these positions, and the demand for job coaches often outpaces their availability. For example, we received a call last Thursday from a gentleman who had just met with his DVR counselor. He was there to arrange for a job coach for the job he just found for himself. The job started Saturday. There was some doubt that the DVR counselor could find an available job coach at short notice on a Saturday. The client was very fearful that the job would end before it started. We receive these calls fairly frequently: there is a willing employer and good match for an employee, but the person can't take the job just because they simply cannot find a reliable job coach.

If employers had some employees who could assist a person to learn a new job skill or to help with communication in general, employees with disabilities are more likely to retain employment. This would end the revolving door of unemployment, followed by months of trying to find a good job match for the person with a disability, followed by 90 days of coaching, and then possibly followed by that individual losing a job if they are not supported.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation. We believe that AB 819 will build upon the good work already being done in Wisconsin to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

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**To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Workforce Development**

**Re: Assembly Bill 819**

**Submitted by: Shannon Webb, Associate with inControl Wisconsin, Inc.**

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Over the past two years, in my role as an Associate for inControl Wisconsin, Inc, a non-profit dedicated to expanding best practices for integrated employment and long-term care supports, I have been involved in outreach and technical assistance for the 'Partners with Business' support model with vocational support agencies, schools, Family Care Managed Care Organizations, IRIS Consultant Agencies, and businesses.

The Partners with Business (PWB) model is a cost-effective way to support individuals with disabilities so they can be successful on the job by educating employers and coworkers about people with disabilities and working with them to maximize the training and on-the-job support for employees with disabilities.

I'd like to tell you a PWB success story about a young woman named Sophie and her employer, Yahara River Learning Center. Sophie is a student at DeForest High School. Her career goal is to work full-time as a lead childcare teacher. After obtaining experience as a volunteer and attending a childcare class at Madison College, she was hired last summer to work full-time as a teaching assistant at Yahara River Learning Center in DeForest. To set Sophie up for success, the Transition Coordinator at the high school negotiated PWB supports with the childcare center.

My role was to provide training and technical assistance to the high school staff on developing PWB supports with local employers. After learning about the PWB model, the high school staff worked directly with the employer to determine when and how Sophie would need support at work, identify co-workers who could provide that support, and educate the supervisor and co-workers so they could successfully provide the support to Sophie.

Sophie was paired with a lead teacher, Katie. Katie and Sophie work in tandem like any lead and assistant teacher would, however, Katie goes above and beyond that typical role to mentor Sophie toward becoming a lead teacher, as well as guide her on soft-skill development, help her problem solve, and help her navigate social and emotional situations at work. Katie is also going to be Sophie's tutor while she completes the second class at Madison College for her child care license.

For the extra support Katie provides, the business is reimbursed by the school. This arrangement saves the government over \$1,100 per year. For Sophie, this kind of support is less stigmatizing than having a coach from the high school or an outside agency with her at work and the childcare center directors don't have the extra worry of unfamiliar coaches coming into the center.

With the PWB model natural supports are identified and developed from the very beginning of a person's job. The PWB model:

- decreases overall cost to support individuals in community jobs;

- minimizes formal coaching supports provided by vocational agencies (which receive government funding);
- eliminates inefficiencies such as mileage costs & travel time for government funded coaches to drive around to different businesses to “check on” or support people for short times during their work shift;
- creates opportunities for vocational agencies to serve more people in community jobs and increase service provider capacity;
- Supports more job development in rural areas where attracting direct-care workers is particularly difficult; and
- helps people with disabilities be more integrated into the workforce by fostering relationships with managers and coworkers just like everyone else.

Some of the outcomes I have observed in my work with the PWB model include:

- In a recent pilot project to test the cost-effectiveness of the model in Managed Care, Goodwill and My Choice MCO identified five individuals at Planet Fitness, YMCA, Pizza Shuttle, Pick ‘n Save, and Marshalls. Using PWB will reduce on-the-job long-term support costs for these five individuals by approximately 50%.
- The on-the-job support costs for two young men, Aaron and Ross, who work at CampCreatability in Monona doing video editing and digital imaging cost the long-term care system \$5,600 per person per year, whereas traditional job coach agency supports would have cost more than \$8,000 per person per year.
- As a result of PWB technical assistance, Bridge for Community Life in Hudson (an employment service provider funded through programs like Family Care and IRIS or DVR) increased their ability to fade publicly funded employment supports at job sites. They have been successful in transitioning people with disabilities to 100% natural on-the-job supports at work. This costs the public system nothing.

In addition to cost savings, the PWB model has the potential to address our Supported Employment service capacity issues in Wisconsin. Vocational support agencies are affected by the direct-care worker crisis. This crisis, coupled with low pay rates and historically low unemployment rates, makes hiring and retaining job coaches extremely difficult. Reducing support costs means reducing the time a coach is tied-up at a job site. With the right education and support to utilize the PWB model, businesses can be in a position to provide more on-the-job supports to employees with disabilities and agencies can use their job coaching resources to expand the number of people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment.



## **Dane County Department of Human Services Division of Adult Community Services**

Director – Lynn Green  
Division Administrator – Todd Campbell

**JOE PARISI**  
DANE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

To: Committee on Workforce Development  
From: Doug Hunt, DCDHS Community Program Specialist  
Date: January 30, 2018  
Re: Partners with Business Bill – AB 819

In 2008, we received a grant to develop the Partners with Business model as a means to extend employment opportunities to more people with disabilities in Dane County. Since then, we've used the Partners with Business model with over 40 Dane County businesses and have demonstrated that the model is highly cost effective and responsive to both our business partners and the preferences of people with disabilities.

Partners with Business offers at least 3 important benefits:

First, Partners with Business is business friendly.

Business owners across Wisconsin need capable workers who will show up, perform their assigned duties well, and contribute to a positive work culture at the business where they are employed.

Individuals with disabilities are an untapped pool of reliable employees capable of performing tasks that are well suited to their skills. These tasks are often ones that make other members of the workforce at the business more productive. And we hear from employers time and again that workers with disabilities bring a positive attitude to their jobs that boosts employee morale and enhances the overall workplace culture. In short, the Partners with Business model can increase business access to capable and qualified employees with disabilities who are eager to work and make a positive impact on their employer's bottom line.



Second, the Partners with Business model provides the worker with a disability with real time, embedded support and it does so in a way that is less stigmatizing to the worker.

Workers with significant disabilities often need support to succeed at their jobs such as occasional reminders about what task to do next or help solving a problem if something unexpected arises in their routine. Traditionally, this assistance has been provided through government funded non-profit agencies that hire job coaches to come in to the business and provide the needed assistance.

Unfortunately, in many parts of rural Wisconsin, access to this service is limited and expensive to provide. And we've heard from business owners that the prospect of having a job coach whom they don't employ or supervise in their business is not always attractive or feasible. Partners With Business addresses these constraints by training coworkers at the business to provide the needed ongoing support, even reimbursing the employer when the support provided exceeds that which they would give to other employees without disabilities.

We've also heard from people with disabilities that they prefer Partners with Business because it allows them to receive support from their coworkers rather than from an external job coach. This is more natural, less stigmatizing, and more effective, as the coworker can tailor the support to the business culture and inner workings of the enterprise.

Third, Partners with Business saves scarce government resources and addresses the direct care workforce shortage.

By training coworkers in the business to provide the reminders, cues, and problem solving support needed by workers with disabilities, Partners with Business saves long term support dollars funded through Medicaid by significantly reducing mileage costs traveling to and from job sites and job coach time spent at those sites. By empowering and equipping coworkers, Partners with Business can save 50% or more in ongoing Medicaid Long Term Support dollars compared to traditional methods of supported employment. And in a time when Wisconsin faces a direct care workforce crisis, Partners with Business offers an alternative by empowering coworkers to provide needed support.

In summary, Partners with Business benefits people with disabilities and Wisconsin businesses and is an example of a cost effective approach in a time of growing demand for long term care services and supports.