



**DALE KOOYENGA**  
STATE SENATOR · 5<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

State Capitol · P.O. Box 7882 · Madison, WI 53707-7882 · (608) 266-2512

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March 10, 2020

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families  
FR: Senator Dale Kooyenga  
RE: Support for Senate Bill 748

Senate Bill 748 will allow for the purchase and renovation of a building that will serve as a center to help blind and visually impaired people find employment.

Beyond Vision is a non-profit organization with a statewide impact helping blind and visually impaired individuals to attain employment performing jobs that include light assembly and running a call center. This bill will help Beyond Vision expand their capacity and reach by providing funding for and authorizing the purchase of a facility in Milwaukee County that will provide resources and employment assistance.

Although the facility will be located in Milwaukee County it will have a statewide impact by providing remote employment services to those located outside of the facility's physical presence. Beyond Vision prioritizes helping blind and visually impaired individuals regardless of location.

Over the last several years Wisconsin has experienced significant economic growth due in large part to reforms that have allowed businesses to flourish. While we have experienced the lowest unemployment rate in roughly four decades, we consistently hear from employers across the state about the need for more workers to fill jobs in a variety of fields. This bill will help alleviate this problem by providing meaningful employment for individuals with a visual impairment.

The bill includes Senate Amendment 1 which deletes provisions requiring the Department of Administration to sell the land to the highest bidder and the date by which the facility must be sold. The provisions were deemed unrealistic after discussions with both DOA and Beyond Vision.

Thank you again for hearing SB 748 and I respectfully ask for your support.



# DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

March 10, 2020

Chairman Kooyenga and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on SB 748 relating to purchase and renovation of a center for the employment of blind and visually impaired individuals, sale of the existing center, granting bonding authority, and making an appropriation.

Beyond Vision is a non-profit that provides employment for blind and visually impaired individuals. Currently the employees do light assembly and run a call center. Their contracts are often with major Wisconsin firms like Harley Davidson, Briggs and Stratton, and Oshkosh Corp. Beyond Vision has a statewide impact for people who are blind, and their families.

This bill amends the 2019-21 Authorized State Building Program to add a grant to Wiscraft, Inc., doing business as Beyond Vision, to assist in the purchase and renovation of a new facility in Milwaukee County for the employment of blind and visually impaired individuals and the provision of related services to those individuals. Under the bill, the Department of Administration is required to sell the existing land and facilities occupied by Wiscraft, Inc., to the highest bidder and deposit the proceeds of the sale in the budget stabilization fund.

Although Beyond Vision is located in Southeast Wisconsin, statewide remote employment will be one of the goals of the Beyond Vision Ability Center when their new facility is fully operational.

I appreciate your consideration of this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.