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AB597 AODA ASSESSMENTS TESTIMONY

Chairman Hutton I want to take a moment and thank not only for holding a hearing on AB597 today but for your leadership in the Corrections work group that the Speaker organized this session. It was from your leadership that this bill began. Our fall meeting with the Department of Corrections staff uncovered a cumbersome process that was significantly slowing down the ability of the Department to connect inmates at our facilities with work opportunities simply because of mismatched laws and administrative code. This bill dealing with AODA issues can really be referred to as a Red Tape Review bill as well as a jobs bill.

The Department of Corrections requested the ability to have some flexibility in the way that AODA assessments and driver safety plans are completed. Just a little background on what me mean by assessment and driver safety plan.

The Intoxicated Driver Program (IDP) was created in 1982 to reduce the number of impaired driving related crashes and related injuries, deaths, and property damage. There are two parts to the program, an assessment and a driver safety plan.

Anyone convicted of an operating while intoxicated (OWI) related offense (alcohol or drug) is required to contact the approved assessment facility for their county of residence within 72 hours of conviction or immediately upon receipt of an order from the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The assessment evaluates an individual's alcohol and/or other drug use habits. Assessors use the Wisconsin Assessment of the Impaired Driver (WAID) to determine whether drivers need education, treatment, or both to reduce the likelihood they will drive impaired in the future. A driver safety plan is prepared following the assessment. Completion of the driver safety plan is required to have driving privileges restored.

Currently, counties simply will not accept documentation from an inmate's county of incarceration towards the completion of a mandated driver safety plan and associated AODA assessment requiring instead that the assessment be completed in the inmate's county of residence as I mentioned. The assessment process does not vary from county and county and there is really no reason that an assessment completed anywhere in the state should not be sufficient for these purposes to an inmate's county of origin to show they have completed the mandated process.

The reason this issue becomes so important in our discussions on jobs and corrections reforms is that inmates ordered to receive these assessments must have them completed in order to be eligible for certain work requirements in DOC programs. The current county of residence process in essence is stopping otherwise eligible inmates from acquiring certain work skills, preventing these individuals from developing the dependability and reliability to be at a work site

that employers find so very important. A soft skill that an inmate will carry forward with them after release as well.

AB597 does a couple things, first it allows DOC to operate a facility that can perform the required assessments if they so choose. Contrary to what the fiscal estimate assumptions state DOC could in fact operate this program within an existing facility and hire or utilize an on staff assessment professional to complete the required steps (assessment and driver safety plan creation). There is a second option as well, this bill states that all driver safety plans created in any DHS approved facility operated by either DOC, a county, or a tribe must be accepted by all other DHS approved facilities. In essence this mean DOC can transport an inmate to an approved facility in the county that the inmate is housed in for completion of the assessment and driver safety plan.

I think these common sense reforms will allows many more otherwise qualified inmates to participate in work programs that will help lead to creating work skills, self-sufficiency, dependability and reliability that in the end will reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend, thus saving the taxpayers thousands upon thousands of dollar per inmate per year. Thank you for taking the time to hear AB597 today, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Scott Krug

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Krug". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "S" and "K".

State Representative
72nd Assembly District