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AB599 WINDOWS TO WORK TESTIMONY

Chairman Hutton, thank you for holding a hearing on these very important bills today, I am happy to be a part of the Assembly workgroup on Corrections related issues and feel that the future of Wisconsin's correctional systems will be more community based programs that work to get inmates back on the path to self-sufficiency.

As some of you may know I started out in law enforcement and corrections right out of college. As a road deputy and as a correctional officer I quickly began to see a pattern of the same individuals going through what was seemingly a revolving door at the County Jail. I became interested in trying to find out some of the root causes to that problem in the late 90's and got my start on policy making because of it.

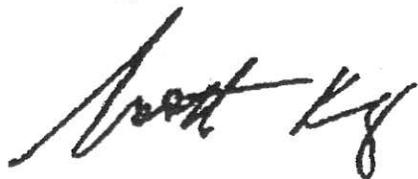
Soon after I got my first chance to work on finding out what caused the revolving door effect and work toward finding solutions. As the Wood County Jail Discharge Planner I was able to craft a program that worked to find HUBER eligible inmates jobs and when these inmates were not at work I took the time to work on getting inmates prepared for release by working on getting back drivers licenses, connecting with family members again, preparing treatment options for AODA, behavioral, and other issues. **Point being** that the program I ran ended up being very similar to what is the current day Windows to Work program. In my program in Wood County we ended up recognizing over \$1M in savings over a three year time frame and slowed the revolving door (recidivism) rate from 81% of inmates returning within six months to just 18% returning in six months.

This concept worked in Wood County, this concept applied through the Windows to Work program is now also working at the State prison level. With an annual budget rivaling that of the UW system our state correctional system is in dire need of an influx of smart on crime principles. I am a big fan of the Windows to Work concept, working pre and post release these programs across the state of Wisconsin are putting exiting inmates from our state prisons into work situations and as such are stemming the revolving door at our facilities. My assessment of these programs is that they are inadequately funded currently through our current Becky Young program funds. This bill builds upon the concepts of creating self-sufficiency through pre and post incarceration programming by creating a mechanism for additional funds to reach the workforce development board areas of the state of WI to either create new Windows to Work programs or expand upon an areas existing efforts. The additional \$500,000 per year investment will be awarded on a competitive grant process that DOC will create. The competitiveness of the new funds will allow the best programs to rise to the top and give the legislature its best bang for the buck.

Finally for a quick synopsis of what Windows to Work programs does I have made copies of a simple brochure put out by Family Services in Northeast WI who contract through the Bay Area Workforce Development Board and the Department of Corrections to provide this program to

inmates at Oshkosh Correctional. This is a great program, the Bay Area board has led the way on new, creative, innovative programming in re-entry services and the success of good programs will serve to save state taxpayers well over any investments we make in this area. I thank you again for holding a hearing on AB599 today and am happy to take any questions.

Scott Krug

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

State Representative
72nd Assembly District



Windows to Work is an offender reentry program that focuses on increasing the employability skills of inmates prior to release from the Wood County Jail. Offenders being released back into Wood County from state institutions may also be served. The program is designed to assist offenders in making their transition back into the community successful by providing education, support, and other services centered on employment. Over the long-term, the program's goal is to reduce recidivism.

Services are delivered by a Reentry Coach. The Reentry Coach serves as the client's advocate, working with their probation and parole agent and other correctional personnel. The Reentry Coach provides continuous, intense services three months prior to release, and up to one year post release.

Services provided may include:

- Release planning
- Employability skills training such as:
 - _ Resume writing
 - _ Job search plans
 - _ Interview techniques
- Interpersonal & social skills training
- Setting & obtaining goals
- Financial Literacy
- Assistance with locating, obtaining & maintaining housing
- Assistance with obtaining & retaining employment
- Assistance with career assessment and educational needs
- Community referrals as needed with addiction, anger management, increasing self-esteem, and parenting skills

The Wood County Windows to Work Program is a partnership between the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Department of Correction's Probation and Parole, Wood County Jail, and the Wisconsin Rapids Job Center. The program is currently funded through the Department of Corrections / Becky Young Recidivism Reduction Appropriation funding. Any increase in funding would be used to expand programming in Wood County, and to additional county jails in the North Central Workforce Development Area.

The W2W Program Gave Me An Opportunity To Change My Life



I had a little retail experience at a Dollar Tree long ago, but most of my work experience was as a bartender at four local bars. It meant a lot of nights at work, crazy hours, and out-of-control people. The night life was not good for me. It was hard to find jobs with only bartending on my resume. I started school for IT Tech. I wanted to become a programmer, but life got in the way and I became overwhelmed. I dropped out. Then I thought I would like to work in an office and that became the focus of my job-searching efforts.

I learned about the Windows to Work (W2W) program while I was incarcerated for an alcohol-related offense. I started attending the Windows to Work workshops. I was one of those people who figured "I already know all this stuff but I'll just go, it'll give me a change of scenery." Each workshop increased my interest because, much to my surprise, I was learning new things. Angela Okon was the Windows to Work coach at that time, and I asked her about enrolling in her program. She advised me of the steps that needed to be completed and I soon became a W2W participant. The W2W coach partners with area probation agents and the Wood County Jail to provide services to participants.

Windows to Work is a program that provides employability skills through workshops offered in the Wood County Jail such as training on how to complete job applications and resumes, workplace skills, interviewing skills, job-seeking skills, financial literacy, Rent Smart, cognitive thinking skills, and WorkKeys. Once released from custody, W2W continued to work with me one-on-one. The W2W/participant relationship follows for about a year after you're released from jail. After my release, along with some financial assistance with transportation and other expenses while I was trying to find work, Windows to Work arranged an OJT (On-the-Job Training) placement as a secretary with a local agency. This was what I thought I wanted—a 9-5 office job. I enjoyed it but was not able to be hired on as a permanent employee due to funding cuts within the agency. So, I was back to trying to find work again.

Then earlier this year, the new coach Dawn Smack, began developing a working relationship with Goodwill. She worked with the employees at the Wisconsin Rapids Goodwill Store as well as with the Area Programs Leader, Vickie Basar. Once the groundwork was laid, I was able to be the first Windows to Work participant in Wisconsin Rapids to participate in a work experience program at Goodwill. For ten weeks I worked part-time at Goodwill, being trained in the variety of tasks performed in the store. Initially I was excited about having a job and felt more secure at the thought of working, but not really looking forward to working in retail. Now I realize that an office job would have been too sedentary for me. At Goodwill I was able to stay busy and mobile. I was worried about what would happen when I finished my ten weeks at Goodwill, because at that time I would also be exiting from the Windows to Work program. The staff at Goodwill had made it clear that there was little chance for a permanent job opportunity there because of their low staff turnover.

Near the end of my ten weeks of work experience at Goodwill, I went to see Dawn for an appointment. She told me she had seen a posting on <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/> for a team leader at the Wisconsin Rapids Goodwill Store. She told me that while I was probably not ready for that position, I should still make sure I have a current application on file there, make use of the network already developed there, and to watch for a possible promotion from within the Wisconsin Rapids store because that would probably mean an opportunity at a job vacancy for me. I followed my coach's recommendations and a couple weeks after my work experience concluded, I was hired on as a permanent employee. Windows to Work gave me an opportunity to try different things until I found what was right for me. I didn't expect it to be in retail, but I love the job I have with Goodwill.

I am a happier, more secure person now. I learned to believe in myself and my abilities. I had to decide for myself that I wanted to change my life, mostly for my own well-being but also to provide a better example to my family. I had to find new friends to escape old habits. I didn't want to end up in prison. The Windows to Work coaches helped provide moral and financial support when I needed it, and now I'm in a place where someday I hope to be part of the network that helps others find work experience or employment. Windows to Work was a great opportunity for me!

Stephanie Brackner

Program Overview

Family Services' Windows to Work program provides inmates from the Oshkosh Correctional Institution with education, support and other case management services. It is a voluntary program designed to assist incarcerated men in making a successful transition back into the community. The program's case managers serve as the client's advocate, working with the Division of Community Corrections and other corrections personnel to help participants get on track and start a new life.



Program Eligibility

All inmates of Oshkosh Correctional Institution can voluntarily participate in the program. Participants must also:

- ◆ Be planning release to Brown, Outagamie, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Shawano or Oconto County
- ◆ Be released in the next six to nine months
- ◆ Have at least one year post-release community supervision
- ◆ Be willing and able to work full-time (or part-time if in school)
- ◆ Have met the recommended supervision level by the Department of Corrections

Services Provided

Pre-Release Help: Participation in group and individual sessions will start six to nine months prior to release. Weekly groups will discuss information such as criminal and addictive behavior/thinking, general work skills and expectations, job search tools, financial literacy, rental education and community resources.

Post-Release Help: For a minimum of one year after release, Windows to Work case managers work with the client and their community corrections agent to help participants find and keep employment, locate suitable housing and transportation options, and provide connections for education, skills training, and supplies needed to successfully transition back into the community. Case Managers will also assist with:

- ◆ Employability skills training such as resume writing, job search plans and interview techniques
- ◆ Interpersonal and social skills training
- ◆ Education Advancement
- ◆ Setting and obtaining goals
- ◆ Budgeting and money management
- ◆ Parenting information and techniques
- ◆ Counseling, as needed, to assist with addiction issues, anger management, and increasing self-esteem

For more information about the program, call (920) 436-4360 ext. 1390 or visit www.familyservicesnew.org/windows-to-work.

Windows to Work Mission...

The Windows to Work program will promote self-sufficiency for individuals returning to the community through the development of constructive skills and the modification of thought processes related to criminal behavior.

To further this mission, the Vision of the Windows to Work program is to reduce recidivism and increase employment placement opportunities for participants released from incarceration.



windows to work

Family Services

Supporting all people through
life's challenges and transitions.



windows to work

Family Services

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