

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**JIMMY  
ANDERSON**  
47TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**From:** Representative Jimmy Anderson  
**To:** Assembly Committee on Workforce Development  
**Re:** Testimony on Assembly Bill 625  
Competitive integrated employment of persons with a disability  
**Date:** January 10, 2018

Thank you to Chairman Petryk and members of the Committee for giving us the opportunity to speak about AB 625. For too long, members of the disabled community have been denied full access to society and that includes opportunities for employment. AB 625, also known as the Employment First bill, hopes to address this problem.

Having access to a job is about more than just collecting a paycheck. It is about community integration, building social connections, and a sense of personal pride. By leveraging the data and power of our state agencies, we can foster more inclusive workplaces and encourage local businesses to think about how they can create work opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Supporting community integrated employment and workplace choice is vital for our workforce and will lead to a more productive and inclusive business environment.

I have seen firsthand how employment opportunities have had a strong positive impact on people with disabilities and on their loved ones. Over the past year, I had the incredible opportunity to speak with advocates of the Employment First bill and their families. What stuck out to me was just how important integrated employment was for their self-esteem and the happiness of their supportive families.

This bill is an important first step, but it's just a first step. There continues to be too many barriers to employment and too little support for those who manage to find jobs, not just for people with disabilities, but for women, ethnic and religious minorities, and members of the LGBT community. Access to the workplace must also come with mandated employment benefits, a living wage, childcare opportunities, increased public transportation, and workplace protections from discrimination. I call on my colleagues to continue to foster a strong workforce and focus on these next steps.

In the meantime, I'm proud of this legislation and what it does to support competitive integrated employment for disabled individuals in Wisconsin. Please support passage of AB 625 and thank you for allowing me to testify.



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# JAMES W. EDMING

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 625**  
*Assembly Committee on Workforce Development*  
January 10, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 625. I would like to thank Senator Tiffany and Representative Anderson for working with me on this important legislation.

A couple of years ago, I participated in a community discussion in Medford about employment for people with disabilities. At this event I learned about the Employment First movement which is the promotion of competitive integrated employment (CIE) for people with disabilities. CIE is the employment of individuals with disabilities in a workplace in the community working alongside people without a disability. I was pleased to learn that the Medford area was a leader in promoting Employment First policies, but I also learned that for some individuals, barriers still exist to working in the community. I told the folks in Medford that day that I wanted to take this on and see what I could do to remove barriers to CIE.

Since then, I spoke with various stakeholders and worked to craft a proposal that will both promote CIE while also preserving choice of allowable services. The result of this work is AB 625. Several state agencies have responsibilities to fund services to help youth and adults with disabilities find employment. However, there are times when these services are fragmented or duplicated. AB 625 requires state agencies with responsibilities in this area to collaborate and develop a joint plan to assist people with disabilities in finding employment in the community. The collaboration required under this bill will help agencies work better together, braid funding, and align policies so it is easier for people to get the support they need to find and keep a job. With enactment of this legislation, Wisconsin will be a model for the nation in promoting CIE.

I would like to thank the many people from around Wisconsin who made the trip to Madison today to support this legislation, including the folks who made the long trip down from the 87<sup>th</sup> Assembly District.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 625 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.



# TOM TIFFANY

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

## **Testimony on Assembly Bill 625**

### **Assembly Committee on Workforce Development**

### **Wednesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Thank you Chairman Petryk and members of the Committee on Workforce Development for allowing me to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 625.

People with disabilities want to work and earn a fair wage. There are Wisconsin employers who want to put these capable, dependable employees into jobs; however there are often bureaucratic barriers in place that limit access for these individuals to find the jobs they wish to have.

Several state agencies have responsibilities to fund services to help youth and adults with disabilities get jobs. These services are often fragmented across the board, with some duplication. Despite the agencies' best efforts, many people with disabilities who want to work still remain unemployed. I believe that by braiding resources and establishing collaborative goals, our agencies will be better suited to meet the needs of people with disabilities seeking employment.

This legislation primarily creates a unified priority policy amongst DHS, DWD, and DPI to promote the best practice of competitive integrated employment. Agencies will also be required to collaborate and jointly develop a plan to increase the rates of competitive integrated employment. In doing so, agencies will be able to better identify barriers to entry for people with disabilities who want to enter the workforce. By requiring our agencies to jointly and individually set benchmarks for improvement in rates of competitive integrated employment, we can better measure and assess the impact that our policies have on expanding our workforce.

Wisconsin has outpaced the nation annually in its efforts to integrate individuals with disabilities into our workforce yet only 41% of all working-age Wisconsinites with disabilities are employed. We can do better. I believe that this legislation will create an effective collaboration between DHS, DWD, and DPI that will lead to more individuals with disabilities entering our workforce. I urge your support of this proposal.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

Tom Tiffany  
Wisconsin State Senator  
12<sup>th</sup> Senate District

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Scott Walker, Governor  
Ray Allen, Secretary

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**Assembly Committee on Workforce Development  
Testimony on Assembly Bill 625  
Andrew Evenson, Policy Advisor, Department of Workforce Development**

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Chairperson Petryk and members of the Assembly Committee:

I am Andrew Evenson, the Policy Advisor for the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). On behalf of DWD, I would like to thank you for allowing me to testify for information only.

This bill, Assembly Bill 625, establishes requirements for DWD, the Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to promote competitive integrated employment of people with disabilities by publicizing agency performance improvement targets and coordinate efforts to ensure that programs, policies and procedures support competitive integrated employment. The bill also requires DWD to lead collaboration amongst the three agencies in development of a plan to establish specific performance improvement targets and methods used to coordinate efforts to meet the bill's directives. The three agencies must publish annual reports of program outcomes.

In order to best understand the goals of the bill, one needs to understand the definition of competitive integrated employment. Competitive, integrated employment is defined under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) as the greater of minimum or prevailing wages with commensurate benefits, occurring in a typical work setting where the employee with a disability interacts or has the opportunity to interact continuously with co-workers without disabilities, has an opportunity for advancement and job mobility, and is preferably engaged full-time. All consumer placements made by the DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation meet the WIOA requirement for competitive integrated employment.

Each of the three agencies has a different definition of people with disabilities based on the federal requirements for the programs they administer. Each agency also has different federal reporting requirements. DWD has worked with the authors of AB 625 to ensure that the legislation is flexible enough to accommodate these cross-agency differences.

Under WIOA, DVR must file quarterly performance reports that include information on job placements and retention, the median number of hours worked and the median wage earned. The reports are publicly accessible. DVR currently meets monthly with representatives from the Division of Medicaid Services in DHS as well as DPI staff responsible for Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities to ensure a seamless transition of responsibilities for case management between the agencies.

DWD estimates that if AB 625 became law there would be a slight fiscal effect on staff time that could be absorbed using existing funds.

I would be happy to answer any technical questions you may have. Thank you again for your time and for the opportunity to testify today.



The Arc Wisconsin  
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Stoughton, WI 53589

T 608.422.4250  
Lisa Pugh, State Director  
pugh@thearc.org  
arcwi.org

January 10, 2018

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

From: Lisa Pugh, Executive Director

Re: Assembly Bill 625, Competitive Integrated Employment

Position: Support AB 625

The Arc Wisconsin is a statewide organization that advocates for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). We have 15 local Wisconsin chapters and are connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country. The Arc is the oldest and largest disability rights advocacy organization in this state and in the nation.

We are very excited to support passage of AB 625, the Integrated Employment - or Employment First bill.

Employment First is a very significant term for people with disabilities. It means a person is treated equally to their peers without disabilities and is seen as capable of contributing to their community through work.

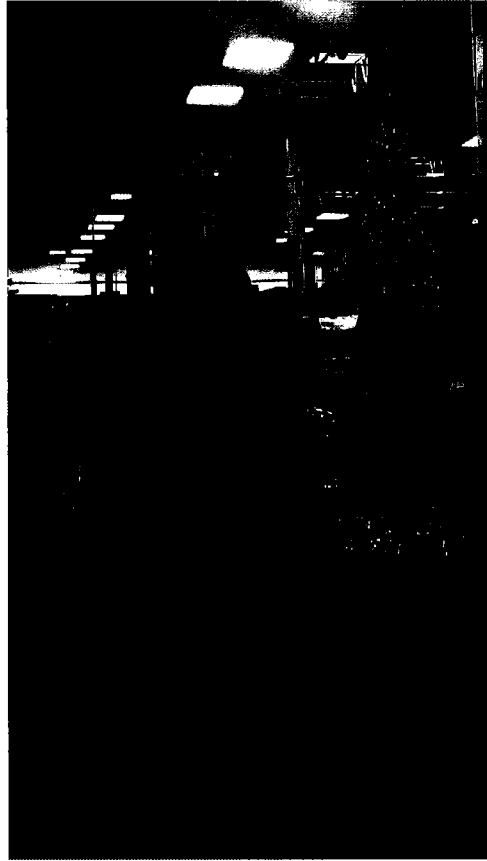


Attached to this testimony are pictures of Wisconsin people with disabilities working, including my own 18-year-old daughter who got her first jobs this year through her school. She delivers mail, passes out water at a nursing facility and helps to wash buses (but only when they are parked inside the warm bus garage!). Did you know that having one paid job while a youth is in high school doubles their chances of working as an adult?

Works brings meaning and pride to people's lives. This cannot be underestimated.

What Representatives Edming and Anderson, Senator Tiffany and all the wonderful co-sponsors of this bill are accomplishing through this legislation is truly a first-of-its kind policy in the nation. While other states claim to have Employment First policies, this bill has teeth. It requires state agencies to set benchmarks, improve and coordinate their policies cross-agency and report on progress. While many other states have established task forces to identify and discuss barriers, this bill goes a step further by requiring action, while at the same time protecting choice of employment supports.

One small example of the impact of employment first policies in Wisconsin is some success the Department of Public Instruction is already seeing after an investment in their Transition Incentives Program, authored by Representative Rob Brooks. The 2017 post-school outcomes survey shows an increase in employment rates for youth with autism of nearly 5% and a nearly 10% increase for youth with intellectual disabilities in just one year.



This bill will increase planning and goal setting between DPI, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Department of Health Services in programs like Family Care and IRIS. We can and should expect even more positive employment first outcomes for both youth and adults with disabilities once this bill becomes law.

The Arc Wisconsin worked thoughtfully with the bill authors and many stakeholder groups throughout the crafting of this bill, including the service providers from Rehabilitation for

Wisconsin, now called the Disability Service Provider Network, to ensure that while we are moving the needle to improve rates of competitive integrated employment we do not have unintended consequences. We are glad that DSPN and their members support this bill.

Wisconsin will be leading the nation with this bill. We hope you will move it forward swiftly so the youth from Medford to Two Rivers to Madison can simply get to work!



DISABILITY  
**SERVICE PROVIDER**  
NETWORK

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF AB 625

AN ACT TO CREATE 47.05 OF THE STATUTES; RELATING TO: COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND GRANTING RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY. (FE)

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT JANUARY 10, 2018

The Disability Service Provider Network (DSPN) is a trade association representing vocational and residential providers across the state of Wisconsin. DSPN members support people as they work in their communities in both Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) and in Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) which were historically called Sheltered Workshops.

Our association's members provide over half of all the successful supported employment outcomes in the State of Wisconsin. We are experts in supporting people vocationally and residentially.

DSPN supports this bill as written and would like to thank the bill's authors for including language that, while promoting CIE as the ideal vocational outcome in Wisconsin, recognizes that people should continue to have a choice of where to work.

DSPN's members wish to see more investment in infrastructure to properly support a potential increase of individuals working in CIE. Wisconsin continues to need more providers in some rural areas, an increase in spending for long term support, and more transportation solutions in almost all areas of the state.

We would also like to thank the bill's authors for including language that prohibits the state from limiting access to allowable services, including prevocational services. Over the past few months we have seen a pattern of MCOs and ICAs forcing people out of their jobs at CRPs. We aren't sure if this is a cost saving measure or a misguided effort to force people into CIE against their will. Either way, we are confident that this approach will stifle transitions into CIE, not enhance it. CIE is an admirable goal, but it is vital to allow people who want to work to continue their existing employment and maintain their participation in the workforce whether that be at a CRP or other environment. Forcing them out of jobs they enjoy to meet someone else's ideal benefits no one and in fact can cause great harm.

We hope this legislation will send a message to DHS, MCOs, and ICAs that people have a right to choose when it comes to employment and that the state supports a person's right to choose CIE, a CRP, or one of the many other options available to people with disabilities in Wisconsin. Wisconsin has a proud tradition of providing exceptional support for people with disabilities. This bill builds upon that foundation.

It is further our hope that, if passed into law, this bill will build a bridge that will encourage people to cross from a Community Rehabilitation Program into Competitive Integrated Employment when they are ready, without fear, and with the knowledge that they can find a great job in CIE and still have the support of their local CRP.

**Black River Industries Mission Statement:**

*"In partnership with the community, provide people with disabilities opportunities to achieve the highest level of independence."*



Assembly Bill 625

Senate Bill 514

Employment First

Preserving CHOICE respecting the American Dream

At our core we are all driven to succeed. We each work to the best of our ability to contribute to our personal success and the success of our communities. This is who we are!

Work is integrated into our passion. It give us a place to contribute, to challenge ourselves, to identify, and to be part of something bigger than ourselves. This passion for success is strong in all people, and we all need some kind of support to excel. People with disabilities also need support to excel in the workplace. With the differing abilities people have to offer competitive employers have the potential to gain employees with great skills and unique ideas. Employers also have unique challenges they face in employing people with significant disabilities. This is where we need to step in and support people that want to work. People that want to work may only be able to work a few hours at one competitive employer. They may need assistance with personal care tasks or need a different environment for the rest of the day, however that does not mean that they want to stop working. People that want to work need diverse choices to maximize their abilities.

- Employment is as Diverse as people
- Supported Work Centers are an important part of a person's CHOICE
- People with disabilities sometimes need more options and support
- Employers need more support to Employ People with Disabilities
- We all need CHOICE in our employment

This bill is a leader in Employment First around the nation due to its ability to give people more choices. This bill supports both competitive and center based employment to maximize a person's choice and earning potential. It is time that we lead the nation in giving people with disabilities a CHOICE in their employment.

Black River Industries, 650 Jensen Drive, Medford, WI 54451

Phone: 715-748-2950 Fax: 715-748-6363

[www.blackriverindustries.org](http://www.blackriverindustries.org)

*Black River Industries is affiliated with Catholic Charities Bureau, Diocese of Superior*





# Medford Area Senior High

1015 West Broadway  
Medford, Wisconsin 54451-1311

Phone (715) 748-5951  
Fax (715) 748-6438

Jill Lybert, Principal

SuAnn Schroeder, Assistant Principal

Andy Guden, Activities Director

*Ordinary is a Given. Greatness is Achieved.*

January 8, 2018

As staff and students of Medford Area Senior High, we present testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 625 and Senate Bill 514.

We are teachers who have been implementing Employment First Grant initiatives in our community for the past three years, teaching employability skills, and training Student Ambassadors. Through the Employment First Grant we have worked to increase awareness of competitive, integrated employment throughout our community. Some of our students who have obtained employment would like to share their experiences with you.

- “Hello my name is Hunter Hill and I am a student at Medford Area Senior High. I have two paid jobs. One is being a custodian at the high school. The other job I have is working at Weather Shield Corporate Office delivering mail. I enjoy the jobs that I have so that I can buy my own things.” - Hunter Hill, Medford Area Senior High *Hunter Hill*
- “Hi my name is Kody Schultz and I’m from Stetsonville. I work part-time at Weather Shield. My goal is to retire from Weather Shield.” - Kody Schultz, SOAR Program (18-21 year old program) *Kody Schultz*
- “Hi my name is Colten Ruppel. I work at the Taylor Credit Union. I organize money. I like helping the other employees at Taylor Credit Union.” - Colten Ruppel, Medford Area Senior High *Colten Ruppel*
- “Hi my name is Kim Firnstahl from Medford. I have 2 part-time jobs at McDonald’s and Hall’s of Medford and I’m working on getting a 3rd job so I can get off of Social Security.” - Kim Firnstahl, SOAR Program (18-21 year old program) *Kim Firnstahl*

We could not be more proud of our students and all of their hard work. It is our hope that through this bill more people with disabilities will be able to work successfully in competitive, integrated employment, making meaningful contributions to their communities.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Beth van der Berg*  
Beth van der Berg

*Nicole Gripenstrog*  
Nicole Gripenstrog

*Jennifer Quinnell*  
Jennifer Quinnell



# Medford Area Public School District

124 West State Street  
Medford, WI 54451-1771  
Telephone: (715) 748-4620  
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District Website: [www.medford.k12.wi.us](http://www.medford.k12.wi.us)  
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*Pat Sullivan*, District Administrator  
*Jeff Albers*, Dir. of Business Services  
*Laura Lundy*, Dir. of Curriculum and Instruction  
*Joseph Greget*, Dir. of Spec. Ed. & Student Services

January 8, 2018

On behalf of the Medford Area Public School District Special Education and Student Services Department, we endorse Wisconsin Senate Bill 514 and Assembly Bill 625 as it relates to Employment First Legislation.

Here in our local school district and community, we have educated our students, families, businesses, and employers on Employment First Legislation. This has been done through Community Conversations on Employing People with Disabilities, Community Presentations by Student Ambassadors, Heroes to Hire Initiatives, Amazing Races to Employment, Take Your Legislator to Work Day, and Employer Recognition Banquets.

Through our Employment First activities we now understand how the abilities of students with special needs can contribute to the workforce and how Integrated employment opportunities benefit everyone, showing how a true village of everyone working together can make meaningful change and difference.

It is now we have seen a significant change and hear things like:

- A student on the autism spectrum saying "I want to be the Employee of the Month."
- A student with cerebral palsy saying "Why can't I work like my brothers? Why am I not getting the same wage as others doing the same work?"
- A student with intellectual disabilities "I want to work so I can earn money."
- A student with multiple disabilities having not 1 or 2, but 3 seizures and refusing to go home so he could give his Student Ambassador presentation to over 60 community members at our Community Conversation on Employing People with Disabilities.

Employment First Legislation in Wisconsin can continue to make the impossible possible for those with disabilities in an integrated setting by everyone working together. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Greget  
Director of Special Education/Student Services



Testimony in support of Assembly Bill 625 / Senate Bill 514

Greetings,

My name is Dave Fleegel of Medford, WI. My family owns and operates our local movie theatre, and we currently employ one staff member with Autism. Steven, is always prompt, polite and ready to serve our customers. He is quick to notice small details that are often missed by others. Steven became part of our workforce through DVR and an agency called Employment Bound. This was a great way to get an opportunity to spend time training Steven at no risk to our business and to see if he would be a good fit for the theatre.

We support this legislation on behalf of employers looking for dedicated employees. There are many businesses that already employ individuals with disabilities in our community, but there could be more. Our Local Shopper has pages of help wanted ads, and whatever support we can provide to get the training and accommodations these individuals need will help fill gaps in the workforce. Each one of us has skills that are different than our peers, people with disabilities are no different. They have abilities just like you and I, sometimes it just takes a helping hand to fine tune, or adapt equipment to make the job fit the person that can be beneficial, and many times they are eager to learn new skills.

This legislation is the first step, and I am excited to support it and help Wisconsin move forward on a mission to employ people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and efforts on this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Fleegel".

Dave Fleegel  
Business Owner & Current School Board President



***United For CHOICE!***

www.ateamwisconsin.com  
ateamwisconsin@gmail.com

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**TESTIMONY OF A-TEAM WISCONSIN IN SUPPORT OF AB 625  
AN ACT TO CREATE 47.05 OF THE STATUTES; RELATING TO: COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT  
OF PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND GRANTING RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
JANUARY 10, 2018**

A-TEAM Wisconsin is a volunteer grassroots movement made up of individuals with disabilities, their families, caregivers and supporters of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). We currently have 11 chapters around the state. Further, the A-TEAM movement is expanding nationwide with 12 states now having state A-TEAMS. The A-TEAM formed to promote a full array of choices for individuals with intellectual/developmental and other disabilities to experience a meaningful life. We are strong supporters of all employment options, including both Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE), as well as prevocational settings that offer paid work training through Community Rehabilitation Programs. Prevocational training and CIE should not be an issue of one or the other- rather both are vital components of an overall program to provide the best possible quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

A-TEAM Wisconsin offers cautious support to AB 625. It is our hope that this bill will result in actions that expand employment opportunities and choices. In addition, the data collection provisions will provide a more accurate picture of the success of employment initiatives. However, we are concerned about the provision that requires tracking of CIE hours worked "to the extent available through the departments' data systems." Does this mean that if current data systems have little or no capacity to track CIE hours, then they will not be collected? CIE paid wages, not activity based or volunteer hours should be the vital measurement of the success of Employment First initiatives. So often in the past, individuals with disabilities have achieved CIE at the rate of 1,2, or maybe 4 hours per week. Many of these individuals spent 30 or more hours per week in prevocational work centers. Extremely low weekly work hours cannot be considered a successful employment outcome for someone who works many more hours per week in a prevocational setting.

A-TEAM members have heard comments recently through Managed Care Organizations and IRIS consultants that prevocational services are time limited or are going away, and this raises our level of concern. We have also heard that if an individual achieves CIE, he may lose his prevocational services. Two hours per week of CIE should not replace 30 hours of prevocational services, and adult day care activities should not be a substitute for prevocational services for those who want to work.

The reason our support remains cautious is because historically the Employment First movement has been strongly opposed to the choice of prevocational services. The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) has authored many papers and letters over the years in opposition to what they refer to as “sheltered workshops.” Their use of this term can be perceived as a negative and demeaning description of the places that provide very real and dignified work for those who choose these work settings. Furthermore, the Social Security Act amendment of 1981 established the Home and Community Based Services program, which in turn authorized prevocational programs that are funded by Medicaid and generally run by Community Rehabilitation Programs. We are extremely pleased that the authors of the bill have included language that protects the choice of prevocational services, and therefore we support this bill.

One minor administrative note- in section 47.05, paragraph (3) it begins with “The department shall...” but it is not clear what department is being referred to.

Thank you for considering our comments, and thank you for your support in unanimously passing Assembly Joint Resolution 51 last year. The resolution supports a full array of employment choices for individuals with disabilities, including prevocational and other day programs, and ensure a person and family choice rather than government making the choice for them. It is our hope that the Employment First bill will further improve the lives of our Wisconsin citizens with disabilities.

Respectfully,

Rick Wilson

Family Advocate for A-TEAM Wisconsin  
4229 Orion Drive, Janesville, WI 53546

**TESTIMONY OF A-TEAM WISCONSIN IN SUPPORT OF AB 625  
AN ACT TO CREATE 47.05 OF THE STATUTES; RELATING TO: COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT  
OF PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND GRANTING RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
JANUARY 10, 2018**

My name is Val Triggs and I work at Opportunities, Inc., a Community Rehabilitation Program, in Madison, Wisconsin. I have been working for Opportunities, Inc. for 10 years. I work on projects such as pullies, batteries, O-rings, gum and more. If I had a choice of going to see a movie or go to work, I would choose work. I like making money so I can go on Able Trek tours. I have gone to places such as Canada and Florida. If I don't work, then I can't afford these trips.

I want to work where I want to. It's important to me. I like working at Opportunities, Inc. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. It's my choice and I don't want anybody to tell me where to work. I want to stay right here at Opportunities, Inc. I feel safe here. I know my way around. The staff help me get around when I need it and they help me with my lunch. I also have friends here; I have a lot of friends.

It's my choice on where to work and no one should tell me where I can work.

Respectfully,  
Val Triggs  
Self-Advocate  
109 Emma Court  
Madison, WI 53716

Valerie Triggs



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**TESTIMONY OF DALLAS KERZAN IN SUPPORT OF AB 625  
AN ACT TO CREATE 47.05 OF THE STATUTES; RELATING TO: COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT OF  
PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND GRANTING RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**JANUARY 10, 2018**

I'd like to thank all of you for working on this bill. My daughter, Yael, and many individuals with disabilities will benefit by the expansion of employment opportunities and the recognition of the full array of employment choices. I'd like to thank Representative Edming for meeting with me at Black River Industries to discuss my concerns. I'd also like to thank Linc Burr and his staff at DSPN for their work on this bill.

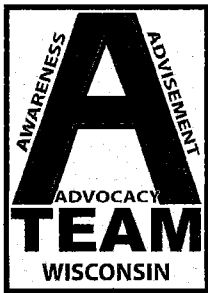
I am a charter member of the A-TEAM Wisconsin and in addition to my own testimony, I am delivering the Wisconsin A-TEAM's formal testimony, as written by Rick Wilson, in support of AB 625. My family agrees with all points made by Rick, who was unable to attend today.

My daughter has benefited by working in both CIE (with a job coach) and paid prevocational employment. It is her choice to have a blended work experience. It works very well for her and she is happy and proud of herself. She enjoys a meaningful life doing meaningful work, and I am grateful she has this choice. Her friends work at the prevocational site, and her socialization with them cannot be matched by coworkers at her CIE job. Her friends are just like her. They understand her, and she understands them. It breaks my heart that Yael and her friends are afraid that their choice to work at Northwoods, Inc. might be taken away. This fear stems from comments made to disabled individuals through Managed Care Organizations and IRIS consultants that prevocational services are time limited. I trust that this bill will ensure this choice will always be available here in Wisconsin because when it comes to work, what might be perfect for one individual may not be right for another.

I am glad that data collection is outlined in the bill. However, what does "to the extent available through the departments' data systems" mean? Data collection must accurately reflect the success or failure of employment initiatives. CIE at very low weekly work hours is not successful for an individual who works many more hours per week in a prevocational setting. When tracking CIE, this should not be counted as a success. If an individual achieves CIE at 2-4 hours per week but wants to work more hours, they should be allowed the choice to work in a prevocational setting, not be relegated to spend time in adult day care services or unpaid volunteer activities.

I am a bit skeptical that the intention of this bill will indeed be the outcome as it becomes law. The Employment First movement has not been supportive of prevocational services, but I am encouraged by the language in this bill that protects the choice of prevocational services. I ask that all forthcoming agency interpretations, rules and guidelines reflect the intent of this bill by ensuring the continuation of a full array of employment choices and providing expansion of employment opportunities.

Respectfully,  
Dallas Kerzan  
Family Advocate for A-TEAM Wisconsin  
W5349 Barden Rd, Pardeeville, WI 53954



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**TESTIMONY OF Yael KERZAN IN SUPPORT OF AB 625  
AN ACT TO CREATE 47.05 OF THE STATUTES; RELATING TO: COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT OF  
PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY AND GRANTING RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**JANUARY 10, 2018**

Thank you for being here today. It means a lot to me.

My name is Yael Kerzan. I am a member of the Wisconsin A-TEAM. I live with my parents on a farm in Pardeeville, Wisconsin.

I am here to tell you about my jobs. They are jobs that I CHOOSE to work at. I love both of my jobs. I love both of my paychecks. Two jobs mean that I can work more hours. I love getting up in the morning to get ready for work. I want to work. It makes me feel proud of myself. I don't want to stay home and do nothing.

First, I'll tell you about my job at Walmart in Portage. I have a job coach that helps me. I Swiffer the floors under the clothes racks. I want the store to look nice so I clean up all the dust bunnies. I wash all the mirrors. My favorite thing about working at Walmart is seeing people I know and helping them find things they need. I love that they see me working hard and tell me I am doing a good job. I am proud to say that I have worked at Walmart for 13 years.

After Walmart, I call a cab to take me to Northwoods, Inc. I have worked there for 15 years. Northwoods, Inc. is my work center. My supervisors teach me new tasks that challenge me and help me be a better worker. My favorite thing about Northwoods is that my friends work at Northwoods. I have known them for many years. We are there for each other in happy times and sad times.

I love working at BOTH places and love BOTH of my paychecks. My choice is to work at Walmart AND work at my work center, Northwoods, Inc. This is what works for me and I AM HAPPY. I am glad that I have a CHOICE of where I work.

I want to thank you, and my friends want to thank you for writing this Bill so we can have a CHOICE of where we work.

Please protect places like Northwoods, Inc. because they understand what I need. I am HAPPY working there.

Thank you for listening to me.

Respectfully,  
Yael Kerzan  
Self-Advocate for A-TEAM Wisconsin  
W5349 Barden Rd, Pardeeville, WI 53954



## **Integrated Employment**

### **Casey / Stephanie Owners of Lucky Paws Pet Boutique in Two Rivers**

We Believe Integrated Employment is important to all people with disabilities. Employment is part of the overall human experience. We currently employ 3 people with disabilities and had the opportunity to employ a 4<sup>th</sup> individual last year.

We've noticed large benefits such as higher self-esteem; they look forward to coming to work EVERYDAY. By working alongside our fulltime employees they have a sense of belonging, an improved confidence. They are able to perform tasks and be a part of our community.

There is currently limited possibilities for people with disabilities to find work and we believe that in speaking out about this we may be able to continue to see a change in more businesses opening their doors to hiring people of disabilities.

### **Lauren, student at Two Rivers High School who works at Lucky Paws Pet Boutique**

I like working at Lucky Paws. Thank you Casey & Stephanie.

## Two Rivers High School Students

I am soon going to start working at Goodwill. I hope that I will enjoy it. This will be my first paid job. I look forward to buying my own things. I hope others can have a similar experience.

-Katana, age 16

Someday when I get older I hope I get a job. I am a really good worker and know that I will do a good job. I want job experience and to save money so that one day I can move out and get a job to support myself.

-John, age 15

I work at McDonalds. I really like getting paid. It feels good to be able to buy things for myself. I have been able to meet new people and make friends. I hope to get another job because I like working and being busy.

-Jaleal, age 14

I am able to work but sometimes people are mean because they think that I cannot have a job because I am in a wheelchair. I am nice and would be a great worker. I loved job experiences that I have had.

-Susan, age 19

I hope someday to work at the library sorting books. I want the opportunity to make new friends and be responsible for books.

-Claudia, age 16

Some experiences that I have done at school that will help me at a job are recycling, dishes, dusting, and caring for small animals. I enjoy being around animals and caring for their cages. Someday I hope these experiences get me a job. I really want to work at a place called ABLE.

-Jacob, age 16

January 9, 2018

Representative James Edming  
Senator Jerry Petrowski  
Assembly Workforce Development Committee and Senate Committee on  
Workforce Development, Military Affairs and Senior Issues

Ladies and Gentlemen

Subject

Assembly Bill 625 Senate Bill 514

I wish to express my full support of AB625/SB514 to support choice of allowable services, including prevocational services. Choice is the key to successful work opportunities for those citizens who face physical or psychological challenges.

As the chairman of the board for Westlake Enterprises, a community rehabilitation facility [sheltered workshop] in Ladysmith; which serves the Rusk County area; I know how important choice is.

As you well know, each community and each county has different employment opportunities. If you live in one of the less populated, rural counties; you will have fewer opportunities for employment and especially if you have physical or psychological limitations.

Choice allows each person to work in a situation which is best for him or her.

Community rehabilitation Centers [sheltered workshops] have the development of the potential of the individual as the primary concern. They also provide opportunities for people at various levels of ability.

Having the choice of work related situations is key to the development of those facing challenges.

Sections 6 and 7, lines 10 through 21 are the keys to this legislation.

As the father of a young man with mild autism and as a teacher for 35 years and as a Boy Scout leader for nearly 50 years; I know how important it is to be able to have flexible alternatives to help people reach their greatest potential.

The choice in this legislation is a key to reaching that goal.

Respectfully,

Joseph S. Baye  
518 Menasha Ave.  
Ladysmith, WI 54848

*Jennifer W. Neugart*

1506 Montclair Place  
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538  
[jennifer.neugart@yahoo.com](mailto:jennifer.neugart@yahoo.com)

January 10, 2018

Dear Representative Petryk and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share why I support Assembly Bill 625. I have had an amazing employment experience to date. I had my first paid job in high school, worked throughout college and found a salaried position in the UW system shortly after I graduated from UW-Whitewater. I've provided parent training to help families understand the transition from school to the adult world. I co-developed YIPPE, a program that trains families and youth together on the transition process, helped youth develop leadership and advocacy skills and I've worked on policy issues around people with disabilities and employment. All these experiences gave me a strong background in youth leadership, family engagement and youth employment over the past 20 years and created a niche for myself in the state as an expert on youth transition and employment.

For the past 6 years I was the project coordinator for the Let's Get to Work project, which was a federally funded grant focused on making policy changes/improvements to improve employment outcomes for youth with significant disabilities. That project tripled the employment rate of youth with disabilities in less than one year. Overall, 89% of youth in the project experienced at least one paid job while in high school, which research shows can double the chance of obtaining paid work as an adult.

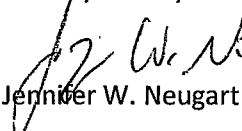
When I reflect on my own experience, I realize it's exactly what I've spent my career teaching high school students with disabilities (and their parents and teachers) to do. Identify your strengths, interests, abilities and skills; grow your network – we all get jobs from people we know; do your best at work, etc. However, there are *very* few employment stories like mine.

I believe that is because people with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as people without disabilities and they are not as connected to their communities limiting who they know. Often, people in their lives have low expectations assuming they do not want to work or are "too disabled" to work, which can inadvertently limit future employment options for them.

This bill finally emphasizes the importance of work in the lives of people with disabilities. It recognizes that people with disabilities can and want to work, to pay taxes, to contribute. It gives WI the chance to set meaningful benchmarks, so we know if we're making progress. I believe this will lead to more opportunities for people with disabilities and teachers, parents and employers will rise to the challenge.

If I did not have the opportunities I did and parents who expected me to do what my sisters did, I would not have worked completely off public benefits that kept me living in poverty during those years, I would not have the friends I have, I wouldn't own my own home and have a wonderful husband and two beautiful and active kids.

Thank you for your consideration.

  
Jennifer W. Neugart



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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

From: Beth Swedeen, Executive Director,  
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 625, Competitive Integrated Employment

Position: Support AB 625

This is an exciting day statewide for so many in our disability community who have worked hard over 6 years to see Employment First become a reality. The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities is thrilled to testify in support of Senate Bill 514 and for Wisconsin to join 32 other states around the country who are prioritizing employment for people with disabilities with a formal Employment First policy.

BPDD is charged under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act with advocacy, capacity building, and systems change to improve self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for people with developmental disabilities. Our board is comprised of 26 Governor-appointed members, the majority of whom have a developmental disability or are a family member. Our role is to seek continuous improvement across all systems that touch the lives of people with disabilities, and one of the top priorities we hear about in every corner of the state is the desire of people with developmental disabilities to work, contribute, and yes, pay taxes. BPDD has worked statewide on equipping youth, families, schools, employers and public programs to prioritize employment as the quickest and most effective way to build independence and pride in people with disabilities, breakdown social isolation, elevate community expectations for people with disabilities, and reduce overall public reliance.

Like you, I'm eager to hear from all the folks who have traveled in from around the state to share their stories of why employment is so important to them. Many in this room are our board members and project partners on employment efforts we have around the state. In fact, my daughter with developmental disabilities Cara would have been here today to tell her story. But hey, she had to work! So I will keep my comments short with 3 simple points:

First, people with disabilities want to work. A 2015 survey by our state's self-advocacy organization, People First Wisconsin, found 6 out of 10 people with disabilities want to work or want to work more hours per week. Many in the survey say not having enough support to find and keep jobs, or not having transportation keeps them out of the workplace. This bill will provide needed supports so people who can and want to work now will be able to.

Second, Wisconsin needs more workers. We now have chronic shortages of entry-level employees, skilled trades workers like welders, and other fields. A 2012 study by the American Society of Safety Engineers found nationwide that workers with disabilities had a turnover rate 48% lower than workers without disabilities, with 67% lower medical costs. People with disabilities are a greatly undertapped labor pool. Getting more people with disabilities into work will be good for Wisconsin business.

And third, while we are making progress toward better employment for people with disabilities in Wisconsin, we need this bill to speed things up our efforts. In our state's long-term care programs, only 15.5% of working-aged adults have jobs in their communities. The majority of people with disabilities who use long-term care in Wisconsin – nearly 57% -- are not working at all. And that number has held steady and even increased in the last three years. This bill provides practical steps that can change that statistic.

Our statewide hope is that this bill moves forward quickly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Swedeen".

Beth Swedeen, Executive Director

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

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

Date: January 10, 2018

Re: Testimony in Support of AB 625, competitive integrated employment of persons with a disability

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.

We ask for your support of Assembly Bill 625, which will positively impact competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities by increasing cooperation between state agencies, identify barriers to competitive integrated employment, and set benchmarks for improving competitive integrated employment rates. For people with disabilities, finding meaningful work leads to greater economic self-sufficiency, the ability to utilize and gain new skills, and fuller participation in the community.

People with Disabilities Want to Work

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) receives calls each year from people with disabilities who want to work and need assistance finding supports for a job that matches their abilities. They are seeking assistance from the Return to Work program, funded by the United States Social Security Administration. A woman who is deaf and has a master's degree in social work calls because she can't get interviews for jobs she is well qualified for. A father of five, recently home from his residential rehabilitation program, wants to go back to work teaching. A man with a Traumatic Brain Injury wants to return to work but can't return to his old job because of his disability, but he works with DVR to obtain training and assistive technology and begins his job search in a new field.

We have also seen teens with all kinds of disabilities sit in Transition classrooms talk about the jobs they will get after high school. This hasn't always been true for students with disabilities, who often saw the opportunity for work was not an option for them. These students want to work and they want work more than their non-disabled peers because they know it is a ticket out of poverty.

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[disabilityrightswi.org](http://disabilityrightswi.org)

800 928-8778 consumers & family



The national data also demonstrates that people with disabilities want to work. The Kessler Foundation, in their 2015 National Employment and Disability Survey, talked to 3,000 people with disabilities and found that 69% of respondents were striving to work.

Unfortunately, unemployment rates for people with disabilities remains high. As of December 2017, the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities is 21% while the rate for people without disabilities is 68%. For people with a mental illness, approximately 80% are unemployed. It is our hope this bill will increase employment for all people with disabilities.

### Employment as a Path to Self-Sufficiency and Less Reliance on Public Systems

Because many people with disabilities also live in poverty (21%) and rely on public benefits, investing in proven, effective employment supports is a smart decision that both improves quality of life and relieves stress on public systems. In 2017, 782 Wisconsin residents with disabilities earned enough income get off Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). The current monthly income for people receiving SSI is \$750. SSDI recipient income is based on individual work histories. This figure demonstrates the positive economic impact that employment has not only on individuals, but on the State of Wisconsin and the nation.

In the DVR annual report from 2016, 4,615 individuals with disabilities successfully reached their employment goals and entered the workforce, with estimated earnings of \$82 million annually. This is more than double the public investment made during their time receiving services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Their wages bolster the Wisconsin economy and provide Department of Workforce Development the means to increase their independence and decrease their reliance on public assistance. With AB 625 and the collaboration between the Department of Workforce Development, the Department of Health Services, and the Department of Instruction, we hope to move the needle even further for people with disabilities.

Governor Walker has been one of the most vocal champions of employment for people with disabilities here in Wisconsin. In a speech, the Governor gave during the *Year of the Better Bottom Line (2014)*, his initiative to increase employment resources for employers as well as jobs for individuals with disabilities, he said, "Make no mistake, *A Better Bottom Line* is not about charity. *A Better Bottom Line* means helping both the individual and the company do well. We are looking for ways to help employers hire people who will add value to their organizations."

Finally, you may have noticed more employees with disabilities in your area when you hadn't in the past. This is a positive change for employees, employers, and our State where people with disabilities are recognized and integrated into our daily lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation. We believe that AB 625 will build upon the work already being done in Wisconsin to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, and we look forward to working with legislators and agencies in the implementation of this proposal.

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January 10, 2018

Hi, I am Ashley Mathy and 21 years old. I have Autism. Doctors and teachers have told me that I would not be able to go to college and my work would mainly be volunteer. **I proved them wrong** because I knew that I was competent and able to work. Now, I have 3 jobs. I work for the Dean at Nicolet College. I started a company with my sister called Soap Sisters and I speak around the state of Wisconsin as a disability advocate.

My story is similar to many people with disabilities. They are discouraged to work in the community and told that volunteer work is the better option. I have personal experience with many of my friends who are very depressed because they don't have jobs in fact some are even very suicidal. I know this bill will help the suicide rate for people with disabilities.

I know 1<sup>st</sup> hand how a job makes me feel. Now that I have a job at the Deans office, I feel like I am **NOT AUTISM** but I am a person. I am a person who is contributing to society like everyone else. Not only is it better to hire people with disabilities to save SSI money but **IT SAVES LIVES!**

People with disabilities are willing to work and are **ABLE** to work. They have that **FIRE** to get the job done and willpower to overcome barriers.

When this bill passes, it will make a huge impact in Wisconsin. They will put their best efforts towards their job because they want a job and they want to work.

**THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN!!**

**Let's make a difference in this world together – Ashley Mathy**