



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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SURVIVAL COALITION SUPPORTS GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE EFFORTS

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Advocacy Coalition Says Funding Efforts Should Include People with Disabilities

(Madison) -- The Survival Coalition of more than 30 statewide disability organizations supports Governor Scott Walker's announcement of workforce development investments of more than \$132 million and notes great potential for addressing the employment needs of people with disabilities.

Survival's three co-chairs said the Governor's proposals could have long-reaching impacts on people with disabilities. Specifically, Survival supports investment in training grants and oversight by the Governor and the state agency administering these grants to ensure that people with disabilities are a meaningful segment of job seekers who benefit.

According to Census data, an estimated 8.6% or 305,756 of Wisconsin's working age adults report having a disability. Of those, an estimated 21% are in the workforce – compared to 69% of people without disabilities.

“The general public often equates disability with inability to work,” said Beth Swedeen, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities and Survival co-chair.

“But in reality, inadequate training opportunities have been one cause of rampant unemployment among people with disabilities who can work with the right job match, accommodations, and supports in place.”

Swedeen said Survival Coalition supports targeted strategies in the Governor's initiatives to include people intellectual and developmental disabilities in apprenticeship programs and in

technical colleges' employment training programs – two areas where people with more significant disabilities are often overlooked. A targeted recognition of this population in workforce initiatives is essential because other states have demonstrated a reduction in the use of public services by people with significant disabilities when focusing resources on specific employment strategies.

Additionally, Survival supports performance-based funding for all publicly-funded programs and encourages the Governor to apply this to all employment services for people with disabilities.

“It is critical that all public investments in services related to employment are designed to produce job placements in the general workforce,” said Maureen Ryan, Executive Director of Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers and Survival co-chair.

“The Governor’s proposed package of programs has the potential to correct the costly error often made in publicly-funded programs based on low expectations for those with disabilities,” said Tom Masseur, Executive Director of Disability Rights Wisconsin and Survival co-chair.

“This flawed thinking has in the past led to little investment in employment strategies for people with disabilities. It is time to invest in the services that return on investment, rather than services perpetuating unemployment or underemployment.”

Survival co-chairs said they welcome discussions with the Governor’s office, Department of Workforce Development, and the Legislature as all move forward on these promising programs to get more Wisconsin residents into work, reduce long-term reliance on public programs, and strengthen local economies.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

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