



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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Survival Coalition Supports National Governors Association Focus on Employing People with Disabilities

(Madison) – The National Governors Association’s (NGA) expected announcement tomorrow that states should take concrete steps to improve employment for people with disabilities is good news to Wisconsin disability organizations.

The Survival Coalition of more than 30 disability organizations applauds the NGA’s focus on employment in its soon-to-be unveiled Blueprint that details how states can increase the number of trained people with disabilities on the job. Survival supports NGA’s recognition that getting people with disabilities into the workforce is good for business, good for workers, and good public policy.

Wisconsin’s employment rate for working-age adults without disabilities is 70%, but only 37% of people with disabilities are on the job. Even worse, fewer than 10% of the 45,000 adults with disabilities who use Wisconsin’s long-term support system are working at minimum wage or above. This is despite survey information showing a majority of people with disabilities want to work.

The unemployment of people with disabilities translates to billions of dollars statewide in lost productivity annually, affecting businesses and communities, while driving up the use of public benefits.

For these reasons, Survival supports the NGA’s focus on employment in the *Better Bottom Line Blueprint for Employing People with Disabilities*, which the NGA will release at its national conference on Friday, Aug. 2, 2013 in Milwaukee.

The Blueprint identifies a number of policies and strategies for state governments and businesses to get workers with disabilities into the competitive labor market, increase profits, and reduce overall reliance on public benefits. Many recommendations are consistent with positions Survival supports, including:

- Making integrated employment part of the state’s workforce development strategy.
- Making Wisconsin a model employer of people with disabilities, to encourage other businesses to get on board.
- Starting early – in K-12 education – to ensure that students with disabilities are part of existing college and career readiness programs and opportunities, including internships, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences.

- Identifying businesses that have an interest in employment people with disabilities.
- Holding accountable state programs charged with preparing youth with disabilities for college and careers.

Wisconsin has many examples of employers who can talk first-hand about how hiring people with disabilities has increased their profitability and diversified their workforce. For more information, or to talk with employers and their employees with disabilities, contact one of the Survival Coalition co-chairs listed below:

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