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Jim Doyle
Governor

Tim Sullivan
Chair

Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Russell D. Feingold
United States Senate
506 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feingold:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

As reported by the federal Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 14.5% in 2009, well above the figure of 9.0% for those with no disability. With current pockets of occupational sector skills deficits, and the lack of skilled workers for emerging industries, the time is now to change policies that would allow more persons with disabilities in the workforce to maximize productivity, and move people toward self-sufficiency.

There are many complex matters related to transforming our programs that currently create disincentives to work. Through our current MIG funding, Wisconsin has started implementing revisions in a number of areas, and want to be able to move further forward with the support of additional funding provided through MIG reauthorization. One example is the Medicaid "buy-in" program that provides Medicaid funded long-term care and health services to workers with severe disabilities who otherwise would have had to significantly reduce their work hours to avoid loss of coverage due to earnings and savings caps. The CWI has gone on record endorsing other shifts to the Medical Assistance Purchase Plan that would allow the 17,000+ participants more opportunities to be fully employed without being penalized. The CWI's MIG Subcommittee will continue to serve as the MIG advisory body, and work across state agencies and silo-funded programs for more systemic improvements.

The issues summarized below only scratch the surface for the need to continue the momentum built with current MIG funding. However, they serve as highlights on the necessity of MIG reauthorization.

Statewide implementation of successful pilot projects and cross-agency program efficacy efforts

Wisconsin is completing the implementation of over 84 recommendations developed by a state-wide, cross-agency Managed Care and Employment Task Force that focused on improving employment outcomes and effective services for persons who are in the long-term care system.

One of the major results is that Wisconsin residents now have the choice of working in the private sector with prevailing wages in occupations of their choosing without jeopardizing necessary support services. Industry employment cited below are examples we want to continue through MIG:

- Targeted employment services uniquely developed for returning veterans with brain injuries;
- An evidence-based model that provides transitional and competitive employment through industry partnerships for consumers of mental health services;
- Full integration of MIG into a true cross-agency system that includes workforce development, health services, corrections, public instruction to remove duplication of effort and barriers to employment; and
- Expand *WorkSource Wisconsin*, a technical assistance center developed by and for businesses, given its growing use by employers. In 2009, 12% more employers over the past year took advantage of the services provided by this MIG-funded resource.

Systemic additions and changes to current programs for optimum employment opportunities

Wisconsin has been active in supporting the development of a quality assurance certification process for "work incentive" Benefits Specialists, an emerging profession dedicated to helping disability beneficiaries understand the myriad program regulations of public benefits. The need for this service by qualified personnel in our Job Centers, and coordinated with partners such as Independent Living Centers, is even more vital since the end of the federal One-Stop Disability Navigator program:

- Implement a quality assurance credential professional Benefit Specialists with MIG technical assistance support for employment service providers and state staff that receive federal funding through the Departments of Labor and Education;
- Add cost-neutral employment support services to the Medical Assistance benefit package, and establish a sustainable mechanism for employment services and supports; and
- Develop a means for the Medicaid buy-in program to be available into retirement while permitting retirees access to public healthcare and long-term support programs at no additional cost to the public.

People with disabilities, provided the right supports, want to work, and can contribute to Wisconsin's economic recovery. We need to shift policies by developing cost-neutral, cost-effective supports, and getting ineffective and expensive rules and policies out of their way. To that end, we appreciate your support for MIG reauthorization. For any follow-up, please contact Ron Danowski, Council Executive Director, at (608) 266-3485 or ron.danowski@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

Sincerely,



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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Herb Kohl
United States Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

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Jim Doyle
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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Paul Ryan
United States House of Representatives
1113 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4901

Dear Representative Ryan:

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Jim Doyle
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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
United States House of Representatives
2446 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4902

Dear Representative Baldwin:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

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Jim Doyle
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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Ron Kind
United States House of Representatives
1406 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4903

Dear Representative Kind:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

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Jim Doyle
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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Gwen Moore
United States House of Representatives
1239 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4904

Dear Representative Moore:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

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October 27, 2010

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
United States House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4905

Dear Representative Sensenbrenner:

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The issues summarized below only scratch the surface for the need to continue the momentum built with current MIG funding. However, they serve as highlights on the necessity of MIG reauthorization.

Statewide implementation of successful pilot projects and cross-agency program efficacy efforts

Wisconsin is completing the implementation of over 84 recommendations developed by a state-wide, cross-agency Managed Care and Employment Task Force that focused on improving employment outcomes and effective services for persons who are in the long-term care system.

One of the major results is that Wisconsin residents now have the choice of working in the private sector with prevailing wages in occupations of their choosing without jeopardizing necessary support services. Industry employment cited below are examples we want to continue through MIG:

- Targeted employment services uniquely developed for returning veterans with brain injuries;
- An evidence-based model that provides transitional and competitive employment through industry partnerships for consumers of mental health services;
- Full integration of MIG into a true cross-agency system that includes workforce development, health services, corrections, public instruction to remove duplication of effort and barriers to employment; and
- Expand *WorkSource Wisconsin*, a technical assistance center developed by and for businesses, given its growing use by employers. In 2009, 12% more employers over the past year took advantage of the services provided by this MIG-funded resource.

Systemic additions and changes to current programs for optimum employment opportunities

Wisconsin has been active in supporting the development of a quality assurance certification process for "work incentive" Benefits Specialists, an emerging profession dedicated to helping disability beneficiaries understand the myriad program regulations of public benefits. The need for this service by qualified personnel in our Job Centers, and coordinated with partners such as Independent Living Centers, is even more vital since the end of the federal One-Stop Disability Navigator program:

- Implement a quality assurance credential professional Benefit Specialists with MIG technical assistance support for employment service providers and state staff that receive federal funding through the Departments of Labor and Education;
- Add cost-neutral employment support services to the Medical Assistance benefit package, and establish a sustainable mechanism for employment services and supports; and
- Develop a means for the Medicaid buy-in program to be available into retirement while permitting retirees access to public healthcare and long-term support programs at no additional cost to the public.

People with disabilities, provided the right supports, want to work, and can contribute to Wisconsin's economic recovery. We need to shift policies by developing cost-neutral, cost-effective supports, and getting ineffective and expensive rules and policies out of their way. To that end, we appreciate your support for MIG reauthorization. For any follow-up, please contact Ron Danowski, Council Executive Director, at (608) 266-3485 or ron.danowski@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

Sincerely,



Tim Sullivan, Chair
Council on Workforce Investment

Ron Danowski, Liaison
201 E. Washington Avenue, Rm. G100
P.O. Box 7972
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7972
Telephone: (608) 266-3485
Fax: (608) 261-8506
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Jim Doyle
Governor

Tim Sullivan
Chair

Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Thomas E. Petri
United States House of Representatives
2462 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4906

Dear Representative Petri:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

As reported by the federal Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for persons with a disability was 14.5% in 2009, well above the figure of 9.0% for those with no disability. With current pockets of occupational sector skills deficits, and the lack of skilled workers for emerging industries, the time is now to change policies that would allow more persons with disabilities in the workforce to maximize productivity, and move people toward self-sufficiency.

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Jim Doyle
Governor

Tim Sullivan
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Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable David R. Obey
United States House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4907

Dear Representative Obey:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

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Jim Doyle
Governor

Tim Sullivan
Chair

Council on Workforce Investment

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Steve Kagen
United States House of Representatives
1232 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515-4908

Dear Representative Kagen:

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment, I want to share our support, and discuss issues, that are important for Wisconsin related to maximizing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. At the September 10, 2010, Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting, a motion was unanimously adopted in support of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) reauthorization. The progress that has been made with systems' changes and government program adjustments via the MIG initiatives must continue so that more persons with disabilities are able to work without losing their health care and other supports. The momentum generated from the efforts of the last ten years needs to progress in order for all persons to be an integral part of the workforce, and persons with disabilities can fully participate in our work-world as taxpayers. According to the Social Security Administration, if one-half of one-percent of current beneficiaries work their way off of benefits, it would equate to a \$3 billion savings to the Social Security Trust Fund.

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Council on Workforce Investment

bcc: DET File
BWT File
John Reiser, DHS
Pamela O'Brien