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## **WI Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Thanks Governor, Legislature for Support of Landmark Employment First Law**

(MADISON) – The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) joins disability advocates from throughout the state who traveled to Madison today to witness Governor Walker’s signing of the **Employment First** bill (AB 625), which prioritizes community employment for people with disabilities and aims to increase the number of people in real jobs with good wages.

BPDD commends the leadership of the Governor, Rep. Jim Edming, Rep. Jimmy Anderson, and Sen. Tom Tiffany as well as the broad bi-partisan support from the bill’s 46 co-sponsors.

“Today’s bill signing by Governor Walker is a win-win for Wisconsin,” Swedeen said. “It requires state departments to prioritize employment-related public supports, then report progress annually, as well as collaborate and coordinate more closely together to improve outcomes,” said Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director.

More than 30 states have some sort of Employment First legislation; however, Wisconsin’s bill is especially strong because it holds state departments accountable for quantifiably improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

“The new Employment First law not only had broad bi-partisan support, but it has a ringing endorsement from the thousands of people living with disabilities and their families statewide who want to work, are great employees, and who were in constant contact with their elected officials to see this bill become law.”

Swedeen said one of the strongest messages BPDD gets from people living with disabilities statewide is that they want to work, contribute to their communities, and have buying power. Higher employment rates for people with disabilities are linked with better health outcomes and overall reduced reliance on public benefits.

Swedeen said BPDD and other disability organizations, as well as people living with developmental disabilities statewide, look forward to working with Wisconsin’s state departments to implement the bill in the months ahead.

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