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## **WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE**

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### **RISE Act Could Help Stop Revolving Door**

Madison - Studies show the sooner an ex-offender finds employment, the less likely they are to return to prison. A new bill authored by State Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills) and State Representative Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield) will help give ex-offenders another chance and employers more confidence to hire them.

"It costs taxpayers between \$30,000 and \$40,000 a year to house one inmate," Darling said, "Helping a reformed ex-offender will stop the revolving door and save taxpayer money."

The RISE (Reduce Incarceration, Secure Employment) Act would create a Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) for ex-offenders who are not likely to pose a risk to public safety. Those with certain offenses, particularly those involving violent or sexual crimes, would not be eligible to apply under the bill.

Regardless of the crime committed, the CQE would still not apply to certain facilities-i.e. childcare centers, some healthcare facilities-where our most vulnerable populations could be at risk. A CQE does not apply to jobs substantially related to the applicant's crime. For instance, someone convicted of accounting fraud could not use the CQE to get a Certified Public Accountant license.

"Many inmates try to learn new skills while they are in prison, but still can't find a job when they get out," Darling said, "The RISE Act will help make use of those skills which are growing in demand in our state."

Under the bill, an ex-offender can apply for a certificate after they have been released from confinement. They would submit an application to the Council on Offender Employment. The Department of Corrections (DOC) will provide documentation including the ex-offender's highest level of education, treatment completed, work evaluations, and risk assessment reports for the council to determine if the offender would be likely to pose a risk to public safety.

Both authors of the bill are currently seeking co-sponsors for the measure.

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