

TO: All Legislators
FROM: Representative Macco; Senator Feyen
DATE: December 11, 2017
RE: Partners with Business - Co-sponsorship of LRB -1527/1 and LRB 5027/1

DEADLINE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017

People with disabilities want to work and employers want to hire these dependable, capable workers, but often the supports employees and employers need to get started are not there. A business does not know where to turn. Partners with Business is a model that has worked successfully in Dane County and other communities statewide to support private industry and build their capacity to hire workers with disabilities. In Dane County alone Partners with Business has resulted in significant cost-savings to government programs.

The Partners with Business model supports an employer to enhance the responsibility (and sometimes even the wage) of an existing employee who then, after he or she is trained as needed, provides ongoing, basic job supports to the employee with a disability. Partners with Business is a cost-effective model that is less intrusive to the flow of business than bringing in an outside provider and helps the employee with a disability acclimate to the job setting and culture by learning directly from a peer colleague.

Over the last five years, Dane County has used the Partners with Business model at 25 businesses of varying size with a reported cost-savings to government totaling up to 50% when compared to traditional employer supports. Recent work by the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) to expand Partners with Business into other communities (representing a mix of Wisconsin's urban, rural, and suburban areas) has also shown great success. Targeted, expert technical assistance has resulted in employment supports that cost 1.5x less than traditional government-funded programming.

LRB -1527/P3 requires the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities to expand their unique Partners with Business coaching program for the hiring of individuals with disabilities. "Coaching," under this bill, is providing specific, targeted supports to a business, school district, or vocational agency that demonstrates how coworkers can provide the support an employee with a disability needs, over time eliminating the need for a professional job coach or other individual (typically funded by the government) from outside of the employer.

The two-year technical assistance investment will result in packaging the Partners with Business model and providing small planning grants to Wisconsin businesses and providers who are interested in building workplace supports that increase the employability of Medicaid-eligible individuals, including enrollees in Family Care and IRIS programs. The bill requires reporting on various items, including wages earned, hours worked, and the reduction in public spending on employment supports for the individuals with disabilities participating in the project by a minimum of 25 percent.

If you would like to co-sponsor this bill, please contact Representative Macco's office at 266-0485 or email at Rep.Macco@legis.wisconsin.gov. You will be put on both the Senate and Assembly version unless otherwise specified.