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To: 2023 Senate Committee on Labor, Regulatory Reform, Veterans and Military Affairs

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin submits this statement in support of SB 169/AB 180. This bill was prepared for the Legislative Council Study Committee on Increasing Offender Employment Opportunities. It requires the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to establish a hotline, operating during normal business hours and staffed by DWD employees, to assist employers seeking to employ individuals with a conviction record. The bill requires DWD to provide information and assistance relating to available incentives and programs under state and federal law for employing individuals with a criminal record, including individuals participating in certain work release programs.

The League's positions support restoration of rights and employment opportunities for ex-offenders:

The offender should be treated like the non-offender in all regards except where inherently inconsistent with the prescribed punishment. For the ex-offender, this should include restoration of civil rights, elimination of restrictions on employment except where related to criminal behavior, and elimination of restrictions on political activity.

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Employment contributes to food and housing security, reduces the risk of recidivism, and enhances the wellbeing of the community. Providing and staffing the hotline would assist employers who are facing a labor shortage and seeking responsible employees. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Wisconsin's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed at the record-low rate of 2.4% in May, 2023. This common sense proposal is cost effective: the Fiscal Estimate from DWD is that the annual cost will be \$115,000.

The League joins with Cicero Action, Madison Area Technical College, and the Wisconsin Restaurant Association to urge that this bill be adopted.