

**TESTIMONY TO JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**Sally Flaschberger, Advocacy Specialist**  
**DRW Request to Include DPI Better Bottom Line Proposal in Budget**  
**March 26, 2015**

My name is Sally Flaschberger and I am a special education advocate for Disability Rights Wisconsin. I am also the parent of a young man who is 20 years old who has a disability. Over the last several years, my work has focused on improving transition outcomes for students with disabilities in Wisconsin. DRW has worked hard to educate students and families about post-secondary options to obtain employment and future education. Ensuring workforce and college readiness for Wisconsin students with disabilities is essential to Wisconsin's economy and an important answer to emerging workforce needs in our communities. Most Wisconsin school districts do not have targeted transition programs to connect students with local businesses and teachers receive little training in how to work with the private sector and connect to workforce needs. Youth with disabilities who leave school unprepared for adult life often spend a lifetime in poverty and reliant on public benefits.

In Wisconsin, ninety-two percent of the 2,900 youth ages 18-21 currently receiving "long-term care" supports are not employed in their community even though they want to work. Nearly a quarter of students with autism and more than a third of students with cognitive or emotional and behavioral disabilities in Wisconsin reported never participating in any postsecondary education, training or employment a year out of school.

The Department of Public Instruction requested in their budget proposal two new initiatives aligned with Governor Walker's Better Bottom Line which works to improve overall employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The first initiative is a pay for performance proposal. School Districts would be able to earn an incentive payment based on how many students have secured and maintained employment or postsecondary school enrollment one year after exiting high school. This would ensure a focus on what parents and students tell us they want: a brighter future. The payment would be a 1000.00 per pupil payment and would come after the District reports on their students' outcomes one year after graduation. This proposal requires \$5, 858, 000 in 2016-2017 to offer that \$1000.00 payment to Districts. Representative Brooks of Graton is working on draft legislation supporting this initiative and would be happy to answer any questions about this plan.

The second initiative would help to increase employment for students while in high school. Students with disabilities who have had at least one paid job in the community before graduation are twice as likely to be employed after high school. Those who have had two work experiences increase the odds of being employed after high school five-fold. The goal was to create a pilot program to hire specialty job developers to connect schools and students with disabilities to local workforce needs. An investment of \$1, 500, 000 in 2016-2014 will create a pilot program to hire specialty job developers to connect schools and students with disabilities to local workforce needs. The pilot program would fund 12- 15 job developer specialists to work directly with area employers.

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I hope you will consider supporting and adding these two initiatives to the budget to help increase the number of students with disabilities who leave high school ready to take that next step into post-secondary education and employment. I would be happy to provide any additional information on these two plans.