

# The Employment First Bill Basics: LRB 0753

Representatives Edming and Anderson and Senator Tiffany have introduced LRB-0753 - The Employment First Bill - that is supported by employment providers, disability advocacy organizations and people with disabilities statewide. **The bill is a positive sign of collaboration between disability groups.**

Here is who has shared support of the bill so far:

- Special Olympics Wisconsin
- Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin
- Bethesda Lutheran Communities
- Easterseals of Southeast Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition
- Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations
- Headwaters, Inc.
- Black River Industries
- Rehabilitation for Wisconsin in Action

**We ask for your co-sponsorship of this bill. Contact Rep. Edming's office at 6-7506 or Senator Tiffany's office at 6-2509 before NOON on Thursday, October 26th.**

## A Summary of the Bill:

- The bill requires state agencies (DPI, DHS, DVR) to set Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as their priority policy.
- The bill specifically PROTECTS a person's choice of facility-based employment services or sheltered work. These services are still allowable if provided in accordance with current law. This element was added to the bill to provide assurance and secure support from service providers.
- The bill requires state agencies to collaborate and develop a joint plan to improve rates of CIE. They will identify barriers and discuss policy changes or data sharing agreements that can help. Agencies are required to work with stakeholders.
- State agencies are required to set benchmarks and goals (jointly and by individual agency) for improvement in CIE rates. This will include measuring number of people working, wages, hours working, etc.
- State agency plans and reports on progress must be published on a public website.
- The bill requires that DHS assess how to conduct a study that would tell us how people's services are changing because of this new policy - asking questions about whether services are reduced or enhanced. This includes an assessment of any change or reduction in use of facility-based employment (sheltered workshop) services.



**The bill has the key support of Rehabilitation for Wisconsin in Action (the member association that represents Wisconsin's providers of employment and day services including sheltered workshops). Below is information RFWiA is sharing with its members.**

### Employment First Bill

The RFWiA / RSA Board of Directors has reviewed and voted to endorse the Employment First bill being sponsored by Representative Edming. The goal of the bill is to prioritize competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities as the desired outcome while also "ensuring the self-determination and informed choice of the individual." Rep. Edming's office has listened graciously to representatives of RFW and modified language to strengthen and protect a full array of service options.

A few key provisions of the bill:

#### **No Rule Can Limit Choice**

*(6) The department of workforce development, the department of health services, and the department of public instruction may each promulgate rules to implement this section. A department may not promulgate rules in implementing this section that limits access to or choice of allowable services, including prevocational services provided in accordance with 42 CFR parts 440 and 441, in the family care program under ss. 46.2805 to 46.2895, the Family Care Partnership program, and the self-directed services option, as defined in s. 46.2899 (1).*

#### **This Law Doesn't Limit Choice**

*(7) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit access to or choice of allowable services, including prevocational services provided in accordance with 42 CFR parts 440 and 441, in the family care program under ss. 46.2805 to 46.2895, the Family Care Partnership program, and the self-directed services option, as defined in s. 46.2899 (1).*

#### **A Study Looking at Outcomes**

*(1) By the date the department of health services makes its initial report under section 47.05 (4) (b) of the statutes, the department of health services shall submit a report to the governor and the chief clerk of each house of the legislature for distribution to the appropriate standing committees under section 13.172 (3) of the statutes on the feasibility, including a cost estimate, of conducting an independent study regarding the impact that the Employment First initiative under section 47.05 of the statutes and the corresponding prioritization of competitive integrated employment has had on the expansion or reduction in access to allowable services, the quality of life, levels of community integration, and overall satisfaction of persons with disabilities in this state.*

