

The Arc Wisconsin: Supports employment policies for people with disabilities

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Madison, WI – The Arc Wisconsin is celebrating the legislature’s commitment to promote employment for people with disabilities Tuesday in a press event with Wisconsin employers. Two ground-breaking proposals, the Employment First bill sponsored by Representative James Edming, Representative Jimmy Anderson and Senator Tom Tiffany (AB 625/SB 514) and the Partners with Business bill (LRB 1527 and LRB 5027) being introduced by Representative Macco and Senator Feyen are considered unique proposals nationally.

“The Employment First bill is notable in how it will require state agencies to collaborate, streamline policies and set goals to increase employment rates for people with disabilities,” says Lisa Pugh, Executive Director of The Arc Wisconsin. “Bureaucracy should not get in the way of people’s desire to work.” The bill currently has 48 bi-partisan co-sponsors.

Employers at Tuesday’s press event in the Assembly Parlor, including a law firm, a radio station and a restaurant, will share how their dependable employees with disabilities help them increase efficiency and contribute to the bottom line. According to national surveys the turnover for employees with disabilities is 8% compared to 45% for other workers.

“The Partners with Business bill which is expected to be introduced soon, takes Employment First policies a step further,” says Pugh. “Employers like how this model allows them to train a co-worker to provide natural job supports. The return

on investment is huge.”

Dane County and other communities already implementing Partners with Business report it costs them 1.5 times less when compared to traditional government funded supports for an employee with disabilities.

“We would like to thank the bills’ authors for working across the aisle to secure support for these pieces of legislation,” says Pugh. “While other states have passed employment policies that require discussion of barriers to work for people with disabilities, this is the first state legislation that requires collaboration across state agencies as well as investment in tools that can help businesses hire employees with disabilities.”

The Arc Wisconsin advocates for and serves people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc Wisconsin has 15 local chapters and is connected to a network of more than 650 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.