



Three bills to improve employment, independence for people with disabilities advance to Governor's Desk

Media Inquiries: Beth Swedeen (608) 266-1166

(MADISON) – Yesterday, in conjunction with Survival Coalition's annual Disability Advocacy Day—the state Senate unanimously passed three bills that will improve employment and independence for people with disabilities: the Employment First bill (AB 625), the Supported Decision-Making bill (AB 655), and the Partners with Business Disability Employment bill (AB 819).

BPDD looks forward to these bills moving quickly to the Governor's desk to become law.

“Many people with disabilities and their families have been passionate advocates for these pieces of legislation this session, and have been eagerly awaiting the passage of these bills,” said Beth Swedeen, BPDD Executive Director. “All three bills will lead to greater opportunities for people with disabilities.”

The **Employment First** bill (AB 625) bill prioritizes community employment for people with disabilities and aims to increase the number of people in real jobs with good wages. BPDD appreciates the leadership of Rep. Jim Edming and Sen. Tom Tiffany as well as the broad bi-partisan support from the bill's 46 co-sponsors.

The **Partners in Business Disability Employment** bill (AB 819) will provide direct support and technical assistance to businesses interested in hiring people with disabilities. This bill expands a successful model that has resulted in a 75% community employment success rate statewide. BPDD appreciates the leadership of Rep. John Macco and Sen. Dan Feyen and the 22 bi-partisan co-sponsors of the bill.

“The Employment First and Partners in Business bills continue the commitment by both the Legislature and the Governor to improving job opportunities for people with disabilities,” said Beth Swedeen.

“People with disabilities want to work, contribute to their communities, and pay taxes. These bills help both employees and employers find the right match.”

The **Supported Decision-Making** bill (AB 655) helps people with disabilities and older adults retain their independence and ability to make choices about their lives while also empowering them to ask a Supporter to help them gather information, compare options, and communicate their decisions to others. BPDD appreciates the leadership of four lead authors in the Assembly: Rep. Bernier, Rep. Novak, Rep. Meyers, and Rep. Kolste and the leadership of former Sen. Harsdorf and Sen. Olsen and the 36 bi-partisan co-sponsors of the bill.

“People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) can acquire new skills and decision-making capacity throughout their lives. Everyone, no matter their limitations, needs opportunity, experience, and support to make well-informed decisions,” Swedeen said. “AB 655 will result in greater

independence, self-determination, and community inclusion for people with I/DD, and gives families more flexibility in supporting their loved ones.”