



Office of Governor Scott Walker  
115 East Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

March 5, 2014

Dear Governor Walker,

On behalf of the Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), the only national non-profit organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities, we would like to applaud your declaration of 2014 as year of “A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities.” We strongly believe that the current low participation rate of citizens with disabilities in the workforce (30%) is unacceptable and that all individuals deserve the right to a real job at a real wage. We would like to express our gratitude for your leadership and to highlight opportunities for us to partner with your administration.

Your recent focus on raising employment rates for individuals with disabilities provides a great step in the right direction to address the critical barriers that have perpetuated low outcomes and expectations for individuals with disabilities. We are very pleased to see that your recent employment package included \$4 million in additional funds for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which will greatly help to reduce waitlists and to provide crucial employment supports. Additionally, we would like to thank you for:

- The comprehensive \$32 million mental health package that includes IPS employment supports and additional money for community-based supports;
- Including disabilities advocates in your Employment Roundtable in January to discuss ideas with potential employers about concerns and opportunities to hire more individuals with disabilities;
- Employment bill after State of the State that includes \$1 million in training grants to encourage businesses to train workers with disabilities;
- Expanding Project SEARCH in Wisconsin by 20 from seven over the next three years; and
- Setting clear priorities in the Year of a Better Bottom Line that includes overcoming barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities such as transportation issues, employer participation, adaptable workplace challenges, costs relating to the launch of opportunities within a company, retention, and general awareness and knowledge of advantages.

Under your leadership we are excited to see how state agencies will improve on building, recognizing, and promoting public and private programs and organizations to improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. There are many organizations in Wisconsin who have joined the national trend to move away from sheltered employment services and your support will provide a catalyst for others looking to change their practices.



We are confident that we can partner with you and your team to create new opportunities in your state for individuals with disabilities. If possible, we would greatly appreciate an opportunity for our WI APSE chapter leaders to meet with you and your team to discuss how we can boost awareness and support your efforts to increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities in integrated employment, at or above minimum wage.

We look forward to hearing from you and any opportunities to support you in your efforts.

Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Laura Owens