

Co-Sponsorship Memorandum

To: All Legislators

From: Representative Petryk, Penterman, and Senator Roth

Date: September 30, 2021

RE: LRB 4768 – Reemployment Assistance Legislation (Reforming Unemployment Insurance into a reemployment program)

Deadline: Friday October 15th, 2021, noon

Unemployment Insurance (UI) is available to those who lost their job through no fault of their own and individuals must meet state and federal eligibility requirements to maintain benefits. But the program has not focused on what its core mission should be, to help people find a rewarding, family-supporting job while collecting benefits.

This is at a time when the state has a workforce shortage in many sectors of our state's economy. By redesigning the purpose and scope of the UI program, we can reshape its focus from a benefits program to a reemployment program. This transformation will provide more employment support for people who are on UI, enabling them to start their next career sooner while helping employers connect with the talent they need.

By also refocusing the purpose of UI, we can help Wisconsin's economy recover quicker and stronger because the best long-term way to help those unemployed is through a steady work paycheck. This legislation builds off of the success of other states' UI programs by emphasizing employment in the UI program. For example, in Nebraska, individuals who received universal employment services while on UI spent less time on UI and were more successful in returning to work sooner, earning higher wages and retaining their job.

The Reemployment Assist bill will accomplish this workforce goal via several provisions, including:

- Renaming the UI program to the Division of Reemployment Assistance.
- Adding a policy declaration that reemployment should be a focus of the program.
- Requiring the Department of Workforce Development to engage in universal workforce assessments and reemployment services by providing individuals early access to customized workforce services to get them access to employment services at the start of the UI claim.
 - This means claimants will receive an online career readiness assessment when starting their claim to identify their career skills and talents.

- DWD will then use this information to develop a personalized employment plan for the individual.
- Require the claimant to participate in services to help complete their employment plan, like resume writing workshops, soft-skills training, and employment workshops.
- Require an individual to post their resume on www.JobCenterofWisconsin.com within 7 days of starting a UI claim.
- Provide individuals with customized job offers when a person applies for weekly benefits based on their uploaded resume.
- Require an individual to apply to jobs that could result in a hire as part of their weekly work search actions.
- Providing grants to employers to hire people who have recently exhausted their UI benefits to help cover retraining efforts.
- Provide additional incentives for someone on UI to get a part-time job while maintaining part of their UI benefit.
- Require UI to participate and be included in Wisconsin's 4-year workforce strategic plan that is submitted to the US Department of Labor.
- Before a person's UI benefits run out they would receive a counseling session from DWD about the next steps and how they can continue to engage in the labor market
- Require DWD to follow the employment status of people on reemployment assistance after they leave the program to track employment outcomes and see trends to better enable future changes to the program.

With additional federal dollars now available to help fundamentally transform this program, we as a state cannot pass up this unique opportunity to help out these individuals and move the needle in addressing our state's workforce shortage.

If you would like to co-sponsor this proposal, please contact Representative Petryk's office at (608) 266-0660 or Senator Roth's office at (608) 266-0718 by Noon on October 15th.

The analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau is included with the bill attachment.