



# CODY HORLACHER

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April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Chairman Krug and Public Benefit Reform Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a Public Hearing on AB 242 related to substance abuse screening, testing, and treatment requirements for certain work experience programs.

AB 242 helps those who utilize the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program receive the treatment and support that they need to continue to work and thrive in the State of Wisconsin.

This bill allows for the Department of Children and Families (DCF), or the agency that DCF has contracted with, to determine the best way to screen and test those receiving W-2 benefits. This flexibility allows the department to better address the needs of those receiving W-2 benefits.

AB 242 also adds three additional W-2 work experience programs to the required screening and testing requirements, ensuring that those receiving benefits across a wide variety of programs are able to remain eligible, including the adult members of the individual's W-2 group whose income or assets are included in determining the individual's eligibility for the program.

Last session the state legislature passed 2015 Act 55, which provided substance abuse screening, testing, and treatment as an eligibility requirement for three work experience programs, W-2 services for non-custodial parents, including W-2 TEMP and stipends, the Transform Milwaukee & Transitional Jobs Programs, and Children First. We are continuing the work we started last session with additional W-2 work experience programs included.

This bill protects dependent children. Should an individual test positive for controlled substances during the screening and testing or fail to cooperate with the testing or treatment requirements, DCF will be able to pay the monthly grant to the protective payee to use exclusively on behalf of the individual's dependent children. The bill directs DCF to promulgate rules to manage a protective payee system. This important piece of the legislation ensures that dependent children receive the benefits that they need to thrive, while maintaining the important drug screening and treatment requirements for the adult parent.

This is a commonsense bill that helps those who utilize the W-2 program remain eligible for their benefits, allows DCF the flexibility to make necessary changes to procedure to better address the needs of each individual, and protects some of our most vulnerable Wisconsinites, children. We need to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently in the W-2 work experience programs. This bill will address those issues and continue to support those who may struggle with substance abuse but want to work in Wisconsin.



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Assembly Bill 242 Testimony  
Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform  
18 April 2017

Testimony from Roxanne Bouland  
Southern Wisconsin Business Director

Thank you, Chairman Krug, Vice-Chair Vorpapel and members of the Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform for allowing me the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 242, and to Representative Horlacher and Senator Darling for authoring this legislation.

My name is Roxanne Bouland, and I am the Southern Wisconsin Business Director for Wisconsin Property Taxpayers Incorporated (WPT.) I am here today representing about 5,000 businesses from the Southern Wisconsin region, including companies in manufacturing, agriculture, automotive, and retail, just to name a few.

WPT is comprised of more than 18,000 business members from around the state, however, I felt it very important that I attend and testify in favor of this legislation because of the constant feedback I hear in Southern Wisconsin regarding this very issue. Before I dive into the reasons for which our organization will support this measure, I think it's relevant and important to share the optimism among small business owners around Wisconsin. Over the past few months, I have met countless individuals who have shared with me their plans to reinvest, expand, or hire more people. That's exciting news, considering small business employers make up such a large portion of the workforce, and the overall new jobs created each year in our state.

It's that optimism amongst employers, coupled with the statewide discussion surrounding bills such as AB 242, which compelled me to appear before you today.

As business owners look to expand their operations, and hire more Wisconsinites, it is truly critical that those in the job employment are workforce ready. In the case of AB 242, which applies to certain work experience programs, drug screening not only prepares the participants to be work-force ready, but also gives them a real life glimpse into the reality of the employment practices of many in the private sector.

As I do every day, I recently had a conversation with a business owner, named Craig, from Janesville. After news broke last month of Governor Walker's intentions to require screening for those receiving Medicaid in Wisconsin, our topic of discussion was whether he agreed or disagreed with the idea of drug screening for those on public assistance.

I'll never forget what he said; *"There's a misconception out there that those of us who support drug testing just want to kick people off government programs, and take away their lifeline,"* he said. *"That's so far from the truth. I would rather have the state drug test them and get them help before they apply for a job with me, and I would have to fire them or deny them employment, and they would probably just fall deeper into addiction or government dependence."*

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That's why WPT is here today; because our members overwhelmingly share this sentiment. The view of our entire membership is that proposals such as these are not a question of whether to kick people off programs, but whether we will make changes that will help programs achieve what they were designed to achieve in the first place.

Imagine if you were a good person who had an addiction, but you wanted nothing more than to support yourself, find gainful employment, or provide for your family.

Now imagine if you found a work experience program from the state that was supposed to help provide you with the tools to be workforce ready, and help you achieve that dream. You get through the program, maybe find a job, or get an interview, and not only are you denied a position that could have helped you realize your dream because of a failed drug test, but you have also lost your opportunity to get help.

In this scenario, not only have tax dollars been wasted, and the chance at having new employees in the workforce passed us by, but this is the worst possible scenario for the individual becoming self sufficient, and an unfortunate situation for an employer, when so many are often having a hard time finding good workers.

If work experience programs cannot fully prepare its participants to be workforce ready, then the purpose of the program is defeated.

AB 242 simply prevents scenarios like that from happening. WPT asks for your consideration in passing this legislation.

This bill is a real opportunity to provide more efficiency for taxpayers, and more effectiveness for the participants of these programs. The bill ensures that people who need help in preparing to find meaningful employment get that help, and helps continue on the path toward ensuring the workforce readiness of individuals.

Thank you for your time today, and for allowing me the chance to share our perspective.

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**THE LEADING VOICE  
FOR WISCONSIN SMALL  
AND INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES**

**April 18, 2017**

**TO: Members  
Assembly Public Benefits Reform Committee**

**FR: Brian Dake  
Legislative Director  
Wisconsin Independent Businesses**

**RE: 2017 Assembly Bill (AB) 242 relating to: substance abuse screening, testing, and treatment requirements for certain work experience programs, providing an exemption from emergency rule-making procedures, and requiring the exercise of rule-making authority.**

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Chairman Krug and committee members my name is Brian Dake, Legislative Director for Wisconsin Independent Businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of 2017 Assembly Bill (AB) 242.

By way of background, Wisconsin Independent Businesses (WIB) was formed in 1977 to provide small, independent business owners with a voice in the legislative and regulatory activities of state government. The vast majority of our 4,000 members own and operate businesses that have fewer than 25 employees and annual gross revenues of less than \$5 million.

This legislation addresses two areas of concern for small employers – substance abuse in the workplace and workforce development.

Substance abuse in the workplace is on the rise. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, nearly 70% of drug users are employed. Impaired workers are often physically unable to perform their assigned tasks and their decision-making abilities are greatly diminished. In other words, impaired workers present an unacceptable risk to small employers who are duty-bound to operate a safe workplace for their employees, customers and clients.

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There is no easy solution to this complex problem, but there are steps that can, and should be taken, to reduce substance abuse in the workplace.

W-2 participants are prospective employees for small employers. Drug screening, testing and treatment of these prospective employees helps make sure that they can safely carry out their assigned duties should they be hired

We routinely hear from our members about their inability to fill vacant positions. This anecdotal evidence is supported by objective demographic data which indicates that the state's working-age population is expected to decline 0.2% between 2010 and 2040.

Overcoming this worker shortage will require a coordinated and comprehensive strategy. Expanding the pool of eligible workers is an essential element of this strategy. Increasing the number of prospective workers who are substance-free will help lessen the state's workforce shortage.

We respectfully ask for your support of AB 242.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.