



**DAN FEYEN**

**STATE SENATOR**

18th Senate District  
(608) 266-5300  
Sen.Feyen@legis.wi.gov

PO Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882  
<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/18/feyen>

To: The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development  
From: Sen. Dan Feyen  
Re: Senate Bill 924

Hello committee members. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony on Senate Bill 924.

Wisconsin is experiencing a workforce shortage. Our state has record low unemployment levels yet we also have increasing job vacancies in every sector. We need more workers to fill these gaps.

Since 2018, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has been required to develop talent attraction and retention initiatives in Wisconsin. In the 2021-23 Biennial State Budget that was passed last summer, the WEDC was directed to spend at least \$3 million on talent attraction and retention efforts.

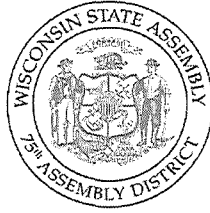
At a time when our state's workforce is severely lacking, it is incredibly important that these initiatives are implemented in a timely manner. SB 924 will require the WEDC to submit an implementation plan to the Joint Finance Committee within 30 days of the law's enactment. It will also require the agency to begin making the expenditures that were already required by the 2021-23 State Budget.

We need to attract more talented workers to our state. As Wisconsin's leading economic development agency, the WEDC needs to make this a priority.

It is important to note that no funding is included with this legislation. The \$3 million was already allocated in the 2021-23 State Budget. This bill merely requires the WEDC to actually be spending the money, as well as provide the JFC with a detailed implementation plan.

This bill passed the State Assembly on a voice vote earlier this month.

Thank you again for taking the time to listen to my testimony on this important legislation. With that, I am happy to answer any questions the committee has.



---

# DAVE ARMSTRONG

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 75<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## **Testimony on Senate Bill 924 February 23, 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity today to submit testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 924, relating to talent attraction and retention initiatives administered by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

Since 2018, WEDC has been required to work with other state agencies to develop initiatives for attracting and retaining talent in Wisconsin. However, under the current administration, WEDC has been extremely slow to implement the program, despite having over \$6 million in surplus funds at the end of fiscal year 2019-20 and despite the 2021-2023 state budget act – which Governor Evers signed – directing WEDC to spend at least \$3 million on talent attraction and retention. At a time when businesses across Wisconsin are reporting difficulty in hiring employees, it is more important than ever that WEDC actively implement these initiatives.

Senate Bill 924 follows up on the budget directive by requiring, within 30 days of the bill's effective date, WEDC's chief executive officer to submit to the Joint Committee on Finance a plan that details WEDC's plan for spending the \$3 million with respect to talent attraction and retention and by requiring WEDC to begin to make those expenditures within that same 30-day period.

Since introducing this legislation, I have heard talk that WEDC is finally beginning to act on this important issue. While that is encouraging news, I believe SB 924 is still necessary so that the Legislature is fully informed of WEDC's activities on this front. If WEDC is indeed taking steps to comply with the spending directive, it should be easy for the corporation to comply with SB 924's requirements.

The Assembly small business development committee approved SB 924's companion, Assembly Bill 940, on a unanimous, bipartisan vote, and the Assembly passed AB 940 last week on a voice vote.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.



TO: Members, Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development

FROM: Rachel Ver Velde, Director of Workforce, Education and Employment Policy

DATE: February 23, 2022

RE: Support for SB 924, implementation of talent attraction and retention initiatives

---

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 924. We want to specifically thank Senator Feyen and Representative Armstrong for authoring this legislation on talent attraction and retention.

WMC is the largest general business association in Wisconsin, representing approximately 3,800 member companies of all sizes, and from every sector of the economy. Since 1911, our mission has been to make Wisconsin the most competitive state in the nation to do business. That mission includes making sure Wisconsin's employers have a capable and willing workforce.

Unfortunately, employers in Wisconsin have severe worker shortages and an inability to fill key positions. According to WMC's most recent *Wisconsin Employer Survey* conducted in January 2022, the biggest challenge facing Wisconsin employers is the workforce shortage, with 86% of employers indicating that they are struggling to hire workers. Moreover, 70% of these employers responded that the workforce shortage is the top public policy issue facing Wisconsin.

The viability of thousands of businesses around the state and the jobs they support are threatened by these worker shortages. Workforce shortages create critical supply chain disruptions. This not only negatively affects employers, but also the prices and availability of goods for consumers throughout Wisconsin. Wisconsin must act to prevent lasting and permanent damage to our state's workforce and overall economy.

The talent attraction program passed by the legislature and implemented by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) in 2018 helped shape the perception of Wisconsin to those outside and within the state as a place to grow, learn and thrive. This perception is vitally important to ensure that Wisconsin is recruiting and retaining an active and robust workforce. Particularly, the WEDC program for veteran recruitment was immensely valuable to employers. These veteran workers have proven to be some of the most capable and reliable employees in the workforce.

WMC was very glad to see the legislature make a continued investment of \$3 million in the 2021-23 state budget for talent attraction and retention initiatives. Unfortunately, WEDC and the Governor Evers administration has refused to utilize this money. This bill directs the WEDC Secretary to

submit to the Joint Committee on Finance a detailed plan explaining WEDC's utilization of the money appropriated to them for talent attraction and retention initiatives.

WMC urges members of the Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development to vote in favor of Senate Bill 924. This bill will provide accountability and hopefully encouragement to WEDC to implement a comprehensive, state-level talent attraction and retention program. This program is needed to ease the burden on employers throughout Wisconsin during this workforce crisis.