

People First Wisconsin



See Our disAbility

People First Wisconsin

July 28, 2011

Dear Governor Walker:

We are very glad that you want to help create jobs for people with disabilities as part of your efforts to bring more jobs to Wisconsin. We are writing this letter to share some of our stories from around Wisconsin about people with disabilities working in the community. We also want you to know that we do not think sheltered workshops are the places to focus employment efforts for people with disabilities in Wisconsin.

Many of the members of People First Wisconsin have worked at these places and earned pennies per hour for our efforts. In fact, a few years ago when we looked at the records at the state there were about 4000 people in Wisconsin being paid less than a dollar per hour. We want Wisconsin to support programs that help us gain more financial independence, become taxpayers and contribute to our communities. The sheltered workshop model does not do that.

We would love to take you to a place like Portal, Inc. in Grafton. Portal, Inc. with support from DHS and the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, has begun the process of converting from a sheltered workshop to an organization that helps people with disabilities find real jobs in the community for real wages. This change is possible.

We would love to talk to you about our ideas to increase community jobs for people with developmental disabilities, even to help more of us start our own businesses. There are examples of this throughout Wisconsin. These are the efforts that we need you to support. We would also like you to look at the recommendations to reform sub-minimum wage that Governor Doyle's task force recommended but that Doyle administration never used.

Your leadership as governor of the great State of Wisconsin is so important to helping people with developmental disabilities find real jobs in the community paying real wages. We look forward to working with you on this. You can call Cindy Bentley 414-852-6462 or Mary Clare Carlson 414-688-8251 from our office for further assistance. Thank you again for your attention on this important employment issue.

Sincerely,

Barry Kress, President of People First Wisconsin

