



Testimony on Assembly Bill 888: talent attraction and retention initiatives focusing on veterans

Provided to the Assembly Jobs and the Economy Committee

February 8, 12 p.m.

Waukesha County Business Alliance

Good afternoon. My name is Suzanne Kelley and I am president & CEO of the Waukesha County Business Alliance, a countywide chamber of commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and convey our support for Assembly Bill 888. We think this bill does two important things – helps to tackle Wisconsin’s workforce shortage and supports veterans in finding jobs.

For several years, our organization has pushed for a talent attraction program for the state of Wisconsin. Even as we recover from COVID, workforce development continues to be the number one issue facing many of our employers. Just as before the pandemic, our employers need employees. They cannot find enough workers, despite increasing wages and benefits, to fill open positions. We can change that by continuing a statewide effort to tell our story and attract veterans and their families to Wisconsin.

The Waukesha County Business Alliance has a broad and diverse membership: 1,200 member organizations employing more than 75,000 Wisconsinites. Our members come from a variety of industries, representing everything from sole proprietors to the largest employers in the region.

The workforce shortage is at a critical stage in nearly every one of those businesses. Our members are already in the unreal position of turning down business, unable to fulfil existing orders and unable to grow, due to workforce shortages. Despite that, a recent survey of Waukesha County businesses showed that 85% of businesses plan to expand their workforce in the next three years. In industries like manufacturing, 86% of those companies are already struggling to find employees today.

Wisconsin simply does not have the individuals we need to continue growing. What better way to focus dollars than by bringing in the proud men and women who have served our country and connecting them to job opportunities in Wisconsin.