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# ROBERT BROOKS

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 60<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Representative Rob Brooks authors legislation creating a better bottom line for students with disabilities.**

**Madison, WI**—Today, Representative Robert Brooks (R-Saukville), introduced the Better Bottom Line Initiative—a career readiness bill that is a “pay for performance” incentive to school districts whose students with disabilities go on to employment or postsecondary training/education one year after leaving high school.

“Ensuring the workforce and college readiness of Wisconsin students with disabilities is essential to our state’s economy and an important answer to emerging workforce needs in our communities,” Brooks said. “However, students and schools face many obstacles in improving postsecondary outcomes.”

Brooks said most Wisconsin school districts do not possess the targeted transition programs necessary to connect students with local businesses and teachers receive little training in how to work with the private sector and connect workforce needs. Fifty-eight percent of students with disabilities report never attending further education or training. Data shows that youth with disabilities who leave school unprepared for adult life often spend a lifetime in poverty and become reliant upon public benefits.

“Offering schools an incentive payment is a fair means to ensure a focus on closing the ever-widening achievement gap,” Brooks said, citing studies showing that when students with disabilities possess even one paid job before graduating, their chances of securing long-term employment as an adult, doubles. Two paid experiences increases their chances of employment five-fold.

Aligned with Governor Walker’s Better Bottom Line Initiative, this legislation provides districts with a \$1,000 payment for each student with a disability who had an individualized education program (IEP) at the time of graduation and who was enrolled in post-secondary education or who was employed in a training program and earning at least minimum wage one year after graduating from high school. Schools can use this incentive payment to improve their transition



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programs with activities such as purchasing a van for transporting students to jobs, adding more teachers and/or paraprofessionals, offering more resources for college preparation and Advanced Placement courses, creating ACT study sessions for students with disabilities, and conducting workshops to better learn how to use data to further develop quality special education programs. If schools meet this new high bar of performance, all districts across the state would be eligible to draw down funds. DPI developed an initial estimate of \$5,858,000 in payments (if schools performed at the highest level) in the 2016-2017 school year.

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