



Kristin Dassler-Alfheim

STATE SENATOR • SENATE DISTRICT 18

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sen. Dassler-Alfheim authors bill to protect access to benefits for disabled Wisconsinites *Legislation codifies recent court decision that overturned a law preventing disabled individuals from receiving unemployment benefits*

MADISON, WI – Today, Senator Kristin Dassler-Alfheim (D-Appleton) and Representative Christine Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) proposed legislation ensuring that disabled Wisconsinites are able to access the full range of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits that they are eligible to receive.

“There are workers across industries who receive disability insurance, but still are able to work part-time because they see the value and dignity in participating in the workforce. Those people should not be punished or discriminated against for this choice, and this bill ensures that they aren’t,” said Senator Dassler-Alfheim.

Authored by Sen. Dassler-Alfheim and Rep. Sinicki, the bill codifies a recent court decision that found a Wisconsin law that prohibited disabled individuals from receiving both UI and SSDI payments at the same time to be intentionally discriminatory and in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The bill is part of the Build a Stronger Wisconsin package that Legislative Democrats announced last week.

“Disability insurance alone is rarely enough to get by on, and many of those who rely on it still hold down a job. During COVID, when those folks were laid off, they were denied the unemployment benefits that everyone else was able to fall back on, benefits that they should have been able to qualify for, if not for the 2013 law that flipped prior precedent. That’s not fair – that’s discrimination, and that is never okay,” said the Senator.

Since the law was passed by the Republican led legislature and signed by former Governor Scott Walker in 2013, thousands of disabled Wisconsinites working full or part-time jobs who were laid off have been denied UI or forced to pay back what they had already received. In 2020, a class action lawsuit was filed against the state, with a federal district court judge issuing a decision this past August requiring that the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

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(DWD) provide back pay to thousands of disabled residents who have been denied or forced to repay UI.

“Whether it’s a condition they are born with or the result of an injury or aging, disability is something that everyone is susceptible to, and individuals should never experience discrimination because of it,” said Senator Dassler-Alfheim. “With this legislation we can put an end to this gross injustice once and for all.”

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