August 4, 2023

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing Assembly Bill 150 in its entirety.

This bill would make several changes to the unemployment insurance program, including: (a) changing the name of the program to "reemployment assistance," (b) creating additional work searches requirements for claimants after three weeks of benefit eligibility, (c) requiring the Department of Workforce Development to provide a list of at least four potential work opportunities each week for every claimant, (d) requiring a claimant to participate in employment workshops or training programs if the claimant is at risk of fully exhausting all unemployment benefits, (e) requiring the department to immediately promulgate administrative rules for drug testing claimants in certain occupations, and (f) requiring the department to continue participating in the federal Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program.

'Reforms' to change or restrict economic assistance programs that are definitionally designed to support individuals and families experiencing economic hardship are not a silver-bullet solution to our state's workforce challenges. Indeed, if they were, then presumably the broad, sweeping changes passed by Republicans in this Legislature—many of whom are still serving—and enacted under my predecessor years ago now would have yielded substantial or material workforce benefits. And yet, our state's workforce challenges persist.

I continue to be perplexed by the Legislature's misplaced emphasis on changing and restricting economic assistance programs while offering no other comprehensive solutions or plans to meaningfully address our state's workforce challenges. Especially concerning is that, rather than supporting and passing the solutions and plans *I* have offered to comprehensively address our state's workforce challenges even in the absence of any plans of their own, the Legislature's apparent focus remains re-passing bills I have previously vetoed.

The people of Wisconsin expect their legislators to prioritize pressing issues facing our state and to work together to find real, impactful solutions to address those issues. The workforce challenges that have long plagued our state—challenges I believe will be imminently exacerbated by the looming fiscal cliff facing our state's child care industry—deserve the Legislature's immediate attention and urgent effort. The continued failure to address these challenges head-on will be catastrophic for our state's workforce, our communities, and our economy.

My commitment to the people of Wisconsin remains—I will always try to do the right thing, and I am committed to working with any legislator on either side of the aisle who shares my concerns and is ready to work together on substantive legislation to comprehensively address our state's workforce challenges.

Therefore, I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because the department already performs many of the same functions this bill requires, such as assisting employers in finding available workers, or providing claimants with job services, training and employment assistance. In addition, the department already participates in and administers the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment program, assisting claimants with conducting work searches, employment counseling and career exploration, and referrals to job training programs. Further, I object to creating additional barriers for individuals and families applying to receive economic assistance when they are facing significant economic hardship.

Finally, as I have indicated to this Legislature on previous occasions, modifications proposed to the state's unemployment insurance law should be considered as part of the long-established process of review and recommendation by the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council, or in consultation with the council and the department. The process is intended to ensure that proposed modifications reflect the expertise and agreement of employers, workers and the department.

Respectfully submitted,

TONY EVERS
Governor