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Secretary Gassman Highlights Governor's Grow Wisconsin Agenda to Help Milwaukee, State Economy Grow

Labor Secretary Joins Milwaukee Leaders in Releasing Encouraging Inner City Report

MILWAUKEE – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman today said a DWD-funded study of Milwaukee Inner City firms shows encouraging signs, opportunities for growth that Wisconsin can seize under Governor Doyle's latest Grow Wisconsin proposals.

"Governor Doyle firmly believes that for Wisconsin to thrive, we must have a strong, vibrant Milwaukee," Secretary Gassman said. "That is especially true today, for as the Governor noted in his State of the State Address this week, our nation's economy is in deep turmoil and all of us must work together to keep Wisconsin's economy growing. This survey shows encouraging trends. It helps all of us see opportunities for growth in the central city, as we take additional steps Governor Doyle has proposed in the next phase of his Grow Wisconsin strategy."

Governor Doyle's *Grow Wisconsin – The Next Steps* agenda includes not only an entire section on helping Milwaukee thrive, but also a number of significant workforce development and training initiatives. "The Governor's strategies are exactly what we need to keep Milwaukee's central city strong and growing," Secretary Gassman said.

Secretary Gassman joined Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Julia Taylor, president of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and other community leaders in releasing results of a 2007 survey of 81 Inner City businesses, nearly half of them manufacturers. DWD funded the Inner City Business Climate Report with a \$75,000 grant. According to findings, more than half have increased sales and profits over the last three years. The firms have added jobs, and they expect to hire more workers, the majority of them Inner City residents, in the months ahead.

"The Inner City challenges we face are clear: residents unemployed or under employed, while employers seek workers with the necessary skills," Secretary Gassman said. "And yet, as this study shows, there are opportunities for growth, job opportunities for workers, and an untapped source of labor for firms looking to expand. The employers surveyed find the Inner City a favorable place to operate. We must work together to see that people have job skills they need and connect them with employers looking to expand in the Inner City. In this way, we help Milwaukee, its employers and families grow stronger and keep Wisconsin's economy growing as well."

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