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Secretary Gassman: Assembly Budget Denies Students Apprenticeships in Manufacturing

Governor Doyle's Proposal to Double Youth Apprenticeship Funding Will Help Ensure Skilled Workforce in Manufacturing, Other Areas and Keep Economy Healthy

OAK CREEK – Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman said today investing in Youth Apprenticeship funding now will help ensure high-tech manufacturing jobs in the future, but the Assembly's extreme budget would deny school-to-career opportunities to nearly 2,000 students a year by cutting Governor Jim Doyle's proposed increase in youth apprenticeship funding.

"Advanced manufacturing is an important school-to-career track in Youth Apprenticeship, an extremely successful and popular program with both students and employers since it began 15 years ago with bipartisan support from lawmakers," Secretary Gassman said. "In the South Shore Suburban Consortium, comprised of the Cudahy, Oak Creek-Franklin, and South Milwaukee School Districts, approximately 4,000 high school students are served. Yet the Assembly's extreme budget would deny apprenticeship opportunities to these students, who are interested in manufacturing, skilled trades, health care and many other areas in demand."

Earlier this year, Governor Doyle offered a fiscally responsible, opportunity budget for working families that reflects Wisconsin's values. Among a number of proposals building on the success of his first term, the Governor's budget doubles funding for Youth Apprenticeship, from \$1.1 million to \$2.2 million a year. The new funding would allow as many as 4,000 juniors and seniors statewide to participate in the school-to-work program that has created strong partnerships between local schools and businesses.

"Since Youth Apprenticeship began, over 10,000 students have graduated from the program, and many are now mentoring a new generation of apprentices," Secretary Gassman said. "At a time when we should be celebrating the program's success, the Assembly budget says no to new funding, no to high school students who want to become apprentices in manufacturing and other areas, and no to employers searching for new talent and future workers as baby boomers approach retirement. The Assembly budget takes us backwards, undermining economic growth and our future, when we need to move forward."

Nearly nine out of 10 Youth Apprenticeship graduates receive permanent job offers from their employers when they graduate from high school. Apprenticeship graduates who go on to college or technical school generally do better than their peers. The program is also very popular with employers; virtually every one of them highly recommends the program.

Secretary Gassman made the comments while visiting Columbia Grinding in Oak Creek. She met with a manufacturing production technician youth apprentice and his mentor, Chester Sizdel, an employee at Columbia Grinding and a former participant of the Youth Apprenticeship program. Columbia Grinding has been a participant in the Youth Apprenticeship program for approximately 10 years.

Besides apprenticeship funding, Governor Doyle provided the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Technical College System additional funding to meet the demand for well-educated and trained workers. The Assembly budget cuts over \$162 million from UW campuses and financial aid for thousands of students, and cuts \$13 million in direct aid to the state's technical colleges.