

## GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

August 4, 2023

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 149** in its entirety.

This bill would make various changes under unemployment insurance law related to an individual's availability for work and work search requirements.

'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 I object to creating additional barriers for individuals applying for and receiving unemployment

insurance benefits, which is designed to provide critical support during economic hardships. State law already has several protections in place to prevent the fraudulent activity this bill purports to address, which makes this bill unnecessary and duplicative. Current law states that claimants must be able and available for work, actively look for work, and provide documentation for completing work search actions on a weekly basis. Claimants also must report weekly whether they have refused job offers or job referrals. Failure to meet or comply with these existing requirements may result in an individual losing benefits, rectifying overpayments, or being assessed penalties. Further, the required investigation and enforcement of the new provisions under the bill would create additional workload for the department, and the legislation does not provide any additional resources associated with these additional responsibilities.

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