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CONTACT: DWD Communications, 608-266-2722

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## **Wisconsin Apprenticeship: An investment that pays** *By Secretary-designee Caleb Frostman*

As a former banker, I'm always looking for the highest return on investment – whether that's time, energy, or money. And when it comes to investing in our state's economy and the strength of our workforce, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better return on investment than with apprenticeship.

Since it's Apprenticeship Week, both nationally and proclaimed in Wisconsin by Governor Tony Evers, this seems like the perfect opportunity to highlight the benefits of apprenticeship for both worker and employer.

When it comes to workforce programming, Wisconsin has done it first and done it best. In addition to being the first state with Unemployment Insurance and Worker's Compensation, the nation's very first laws guiding apprenticeship were created right here in Wisconsin in 1911. More than a century later, we remain an exemplary model for apprenticeship programs across the country.

At DWD, we're constantly strategizing about how we can get more people into the workforce. That has always been and will always be a top priority for us. In addition to focusing on filling a high quantity of jobs, we've prioritized programming that leads to high quality jobs. Apprenticeship programs are about the best way we have found at addressing both quantity and quality.

Apprenticeship's effectiveness at addressing workforce recruitment, retention, and providing its participants with strong economic prospects is derived from its ability to pay apprentices a living wage while they learn, both on the job and in the classroom. And thanks to standards developed and enhanced over the last 108 years, the training is of the highest caliber and provides a transferable, widely recognized and coveted credential.

This unique "earn and learn" model provides economic stability for workers entering a new industry, as well as workforce stability and trade-specific training for employers. According to the Wisconsin Technical College System, approximately 95 percent of apprentices stay in Wisconsin after training and more than half work in the district in which they were trained.

Wisconsin boasts more than 13,000 active registered apprentices, ranging in profession from carpenter to financial specialist to medical technician to electrician and organic farmer. Apprenticeship in Wisconsin is growing and evolving with the changing demands of industry. It is also one of our most effective skill development tools in an economy with a heightened sense of urgency to develop in-demand skills.

We're also very proud that Youth Apprenticeship is providing excellent career-building, paying employment opportunities for high school juniors and seniors, as well as introducing employers to potential long-term employees for up to two years at a time. Underscoring its popularity and effectiveness in providing students with hands-on experience and introducing employers to their next generation of dedicated employees, Youth

Apprenticeship had more than 5,000 students and 3,000 participating businesses in the 2018-19 school year, both the highest to date.

During National Apprenticeship Week, DWD and partner organizations will be hosting open houses and events across the state. If you or a loved one are seeking a new career, I encourage you to visit, ask questions, and explore if apprenticeship is right next step. The opportunity to earn a living wage while developing an in-demand, career-sustaining skill might be the investment of a lifetime. Find out more about these events and the opportunity of apprenticeship at [WisconsinApprenticeship.org](http://WisconsinApprenticeship.org).

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