

Sen. Hansen: Real incentives, not gimmicks will keep and attract young workers to Wisconsin

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(Madison)—In response to an announcement from Governor Walker that he is seeking funding for an ad campaign to try to attract young workers to Wisconsin, State Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) said gimmicks and ad campaigns are not the answer.

“Young people are intelligent and savvy as many advertisers will tell you,” said Hansen. “Slick ad campaigns will not keep or lure them to Wisconsin if we do not give them a good reason to choose our state as opposed to places that might be more attractive because of their weather, mass transit or metropolitan areas.”

Hansen said one of the best ways to keep and attract young workers would be to pass his Higher Ed/Lower Debt bill that would allow Wisconsin residents to refinance their student loans at lower interest rates.

“Employers could use a state student loan refinancing program as a selling point to prospective applicants, many of whom are struggling under the high cost of their student loans. Passing HELD would give Wisconsin employers a competitive advantage over their competition in other states. And refinancing could be done at very little to no cost to state taxpayers.”

Governor Walker has repeatedly said the private sector is best able to deal with the crisis even as it continues to grow. Wisconsin is among the top five states for the

percentage of college graduates with student debt with over two-thirds of state graduates holding student loans. Since 2014 the average student debt for college graduates has grown from \$28,800 to over \$30,000.

“Clearly the private sector is incapable or unwilling to solve this crisis. In the meantime our communities and businesses lose out as more and more graduates consider moving or delay buying a new car, a home or starting a family.”

Student loan debt is also impacting students who attend state technical colleges. The average amount borrowed by graduates of Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, for example, increased by about \$5,300 between 2007 and 2015.

“The student loan crisis is trapping more and more of our state’s young people including many who chose to go to technical college for its affordability. We need to do something to help them get a good start in life.”

“Rather than paying millions to media consultants for a marketing campaign that is unlikely to work, Governor Walker and Republicans could do something that would actually benefit up to 900,000 Wisconsin residents and provide a real incentive to keep and attract young workers by embracing student loan refinancing and the Higher Ed/Lower Debt bill.”