

## INARF Vocational Rehabilitation Talking Points

### **Background on the Issue**

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services provides quality, individualized services to enhance and support Hoosiers with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, or retain employment. VR experienced a fiscal deficit during Federal Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019 of \$5 million per year due to insufficient allocation of state dollars to draw down all available federal matching funds and the need to shift current funding to meet new federal requirements. The fiscal deficit resulted in insufficient resources to serve all eligible individuals who apply. Consequently, on August 1, 2017, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) implemented an order of selection procedure to determine the priority in which eligible individuals receive services. INARF supports Rep. Ed Clere's (New Albany) House Bill 1488, which requires the Bureau to develop a plan before December 31, 2019 to serve all eligible individuals by December 31, 2021.

**Additionally, In order to assist with the implementation of the plan and to serve all Hoosiers with disabilities in their efforts to gain employment, we are requesting an appropriation of \$6 million over the biennium.**

### **Talking Points**

- Hoosiers with disabilities receiving VR services can fill workforce shortages in many labor sectors including manufacturing, office support, food service, and grounds maintenance and cleaning
- Only 39% of Hoosiers with disabilities were employed in 2017
- The State appropriates approximately 16 million state dollars each year to the BRS for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services
- These State funds are matched by Federal funds of \$60 million (78% Federal Match Rate), for a total of approximately \$76 million in total program funding
- The State does not allocate sufficient state dollars to draw down all federally allotted money, thus the funding is reallocated to other states
- **6 million more in state dollars would leverage an additional \$22,200,000 over the biennium**
- Additional funds would eliminate the state's annual fiscal deficit, address the program's staff vacancies, and serve more individuals with disabilities who are currently being deferred
- All individuals who apply to VR continue to be assessed for eligibility; however, those eligible are placed into a three tier priority category system. The categories are category 1, most significant disability; category 2, significant disability; and category 3, non-significant disability. Eligible individuals in priority categories 2 and 3 are deferred from VR services.
- **About 2,000 individuals were deferred between August 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018**
  - Characteristics of eligible individuals who are deferred services according to BRS:

Hearing Impairment	Mental Illness	Physical Disability	Developmental Disability	Visual Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury
35%	30%	27%	5%	4%	0.6%

### **Ask**

Please support House Bill 1488 as introduced in the 2019 General Assembly session and an appropriation of \$6 million over the biennium so that all Hoosiers with disabilities can get to work.