



Business Services/Economic Development Committee

January 15, 2026, 9:30-11:00am

The committee was called to order at 9:30 am.

Featured Topic: RETAIN Program Overview – John Connell & Margaret Odanga | MN RETAIN, DEED

- John & Margaret joined the committee to share an overview of the MN RETAIN Program.
 - The Minnesota Retain Program is a free initiative designed to help workers stay employed or return to work safely after an injury or illness that impacts their ability to work.
 - Retain supports both workers and employers by coordinating return-to-work planning, workplace accommodations, and communication between healthcare providers, employers, and workforce partners.
 - The program launched in 2018 as a pilot in Southeastern Minnesota and has since expanded statewide based on demonstrated success and positive outcomes.
 - Retain prioritizes early intervention, as providing support soon after injury or illness leads to better employment and recovery outcomes.
 - Eligible participants may be referred by healthcare providers, employers, or workforce partners, and must meet established program criteria.
 - Employers benefit from Retain by retaining experienced workers, reducing turnover, minimizing disruptions, and receiving guidance on effective accommodations.
 - Retain is aligned with Minnesota’s broader workforce development system and partners with local workforce boards and organizations to connect employers and workers to retention supports.
 - Program goals include serving a diverse population of workers, with a focus on equitable access for priority populations.
 - Success stories highlighted through the program demonstrate reduced work disruption, improved recovery experiences, and positive outcomes for both workers and employers.
 - Workforce partners were encouraged to share information about Retain and refer eligible workers as part of a broader strategy to support job retention and workforce stability.

Employer-Related Updates: Items Pertinent to Employers or Employer Services

- M State
- Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Development Association of Minnesota (EDAM)
- Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED)
- State Agencies
 - DEED

- The committee discussed how areas are moving forward with the I-WE program.

The committee concluded at 10:45 am.