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*No Person with a Disability Left Behind*

For as long as I can remember, I've been about helping and caring about others. Before I even knew what, an activist was I knew I didn't like that others didn't have equal rights. It wasn't until I graduated college, that I realized life can be so much more difficult for people with disabilities, including myself. The transition to life in the community as an employed individual and ultimately an individual living independently took a long time, longer than I expected.

After graduating I struggled with finding the right fit for employment. The team I was working with wasn't a good fit for me. I then found working with different people in the job search process was what I needed. 3 years ago, I began work at a state agency, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The position was created because a division administrator wanted to create a position to be filled by a person with a disability. He contacted the job development agency I was working with and got candidates from the agency to

interview. I'm very glad I was hired. I float between two offices within the building, doing basic office work. I file, process mail, restock brochures, prepare materials for presentations in one office. In the other office I help them make materials digital, by scanning documents, editing and uploading them. The basic repetitive tasks are manageable, and I don't have the stress and anxiety I'd have in a professional job. Everyone deserves a job that's the right fit.

The year after being hired I was able to get affordable housing in the city I've always wanted to live in (Madison). This was exciting and terrifying. I was so afraid that I'd move back in with my parents due to independent living being too hard, but here I am 2 years later, getting help at least once a week with some things I struggle with. I do many things by myself and have been having someone who does skill training for people with disabilities be like a teacher, coach and cheerleader as I learn basic cooking.

As a disability advocate, I think it's important to raise awareness that not every person is the same and everyone needs some support but should be as independent as possible. Elected officials, government agencies, employers, service providers and others should be more aware of who is getting the help they need and what they want. Those who need significant support and those who've been labeled high functioning and tend to fall between the cracks all need some kind of support. Pardon the play on words, but my ideal policy shift would keep in mind the phrase, no person with a disability left behind.