



TO: Members, Wisconsin State Assembly

FROM: Amy Boyer, on behalf of Wisconsin Economic Development Association

DATE: January 26, 2012

RE: **Support for AB 426**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association is a statewide association consisting of over 450 economic development practitioners. Consistent with WEDA's ***Be Bold Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Competitiveness Study***, WEDA supports state policies that strengthen our economy and create jobs. That is why WEDA supports AB 426 as amended by the Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy and Small Business. We believe this bill will lead to many economic opportunities relating to iron mining, not only in Northern Wisconsin, but the entire state.

AB 426, as amended, creates certainty for potential mining companies by establishing a clearly defined permitting process, as well as setting a deadline for a permit decision, while keeping Wisconsin's environmental integrity intact. Wisconsin is currently at a competitive disadvantage in terms of mining regulations and ability to compete with Minnesota and Michigan for mining jobs.

We believe that the passage of AB 426 must be done in a timely manner so that the economic opportunities are not unduly delayed or lost. As such, it is important to appreciate and understand the state-wide economic impacts of this legislation. The economic ripples to other sectors in northern Wisconsin cannot be ignored. Those in the hospitality and transportation industries, construction material suppliers, machinery suppliers, fuel providers and "Main Street" businesses will undoubtedly reap the benefits of a mining project in Northern Wisconsin.

Finally, the southeastern part of Wisconsin is home to the world's two largest mining equipment manufacturers – Joy Global and Caterpillar (formally Bucyrus International), which utilize local machine shops and other manufacturers and suppliers.

Mining is part of our state's heritage that built our economy. Today, that heritage can be drawn upon by putting people to work in both in the mining industry and with our leading manufactures. In that regard, we urge you to pass AB 426, which provides a rigorous but passable regulatory path for iron mining in Wisconsin.