



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Employ Milwaukee Fondly Remembers Don Sykes, A Lifelong Human Services and Workforce Champion

MILWAUKEE – The Employ Milwaukee Board of Directors and staff send our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Donald “Don” Sykes, a dynamic leader and lifelong champion of human services and workforce. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Sykes served as the President and CEO of the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB) from 2007 to 2014. At the direction of Mayor Tom Barrett, he led a community-wide planning process in 2006 and oversaw the transformation of the Private Industry Council to MAWIB. He created a workforce development strategy that allowed for resource diversification to acquire funding to maintain the quality of workforce development programs, employed technology to strengthen service and program performance, and worked with community partners for contracted service delivery.

Sykes’ prestigious accomplishments including serving as the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Community Relations for the Clinton Administration. He managed the development of a nationally recognized employment program and welfare and anti-poverty demonstration programs. He provided expert leadership to DHHS in its collaboration in the establishment of HUD and USDA’s Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program and DOJ’s Weed and Seed program. Additionally, he provided guidance and support to the department's initiative to address the concerns of minority staff and the communities served. Sykes played a major role in DHHS’s Partnership for Rural Opportunities. At the federal level, he initiated several major programs to fight poverty and expanded the reach of others, and facilitated the development of a national information and reporting system for the over 1,000 Community Action Agencies funded by the Community Services Block Grant.

Sykes was well-known for leading the Social Development Commission for two decades (1968 – 1988), building Milwaukee County’s largest anti-poverty agency.

He will be forever remembered for his outstanding contributions to human services and workforce. His vision for Milwaukee’s workforce system was unprecedented.

Don Sykes was a trailblazer and larger-than-life personality who will be fondly remembered as a great man who worked tirelessly for the communities in which he served.

The entire Employ Milwaukee family sends its condolences to his loving family, former co-workers, and the countless individuals whose lives he touched and forever changed.

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