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**Sample Comments for The Arc Chapters for the ODEP 14(c) Listening Sessions**

The Arc believes that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities belong in the community and have the fundamental moral, civil, and constitutional right to be fully included and actively participate in all aspects of society, including employment with fair compensation.

However, to make that a reality we must remove the barriers to community-based employment and build capacity in the community. Barriers to employment include, first and foremost, low societal expectations that foster job discrimination. Systemically, public resources fund service hours rather than outcomes and are often neither sufficient nor flexible enough to allow collaboration and blending of employment funding streams. Lack of other services like transportation or of accommodations such as assistive technology can also hinder success.

In order to build capacity within the community, there also must be a true understanding of, and commitment to, community employment for all individuals, including those with the most severe disabilities, from government agencies and from employers.

We are living in a time when policies, practices, and legal activities are converging to make the road to employment smoother for individuals with disabilities. We must remember that a job is an essential part of what gives many people standing in their community. Individuals with disabilities are succeeding in meaningful careers in a wide range of private businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations, while others are becoming entrepreneurs with their own micro-businesses. We have moved from a time when the thought of individuals with disabilities having a job was a dream, through a time when the only options were sheltered workshops, into a new era where there is meaningful and competitive work for individuals with disabilities. The value in having a response to “what do you do?” is immeasurable for individuals with disabilities across the country.

The Arc advocates a forceful, coordinated effort to build up opportunities for integrated community employment. On the specific issue of 14(c) subminimum wage certificates, The Arc’s position statement on employment states:

“Build infrastructure and supports needed to phase out the issuance of subminimum wage certificates, increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment, and put in place safeguards to protect the interests of any people affected by this shift.”