

**Employment, Training, and Wages**

The vast majority of our constituents who are of working age remain unemployed or under-employed. In fact, people with disabilities constitute the segment of our society that is least employed. People with I/DD often face a daunting task in securing employment. They can be employed in the community and should earn competitive wages. They should be supported to make informed choices about their work and careers and have access to the resources to seek, obtain, and be successful in competitive integrated employment.

Thus, during the 115th Congress, to assist our constituents to reach their full potential and become as independent as possible through integrated employment, our public policy goals are to:

*Competitive Integrated Employment*

* Support implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), toward maximizing employment outcomes, and improving transition outcomes, for people with I/DD;
* Support “Employment First” policies as a strategy to increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment of individuals with I/DD as the preferred outcome;
* Build infrastructure and create incentives for private sector employers or other solutions that will expand work opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment;
* Create incentives for states and territories to expand work opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment, including necessary individualized transportation options so that individuals can maintain employment;
* Expand training and technical assistance to community rehabilitation providers to transition from the use of subminimum wages and nonintegrated environments, including career counseling and information about training opportunities required by WIOA;
* Build infrastructure and supports needed to phase out the issuance of sub-minimum wage certificates including putting in place transition services and safeguards to protect the interests of any people with I/DD affected by this shift;
* Conduct oversight on and strengthening of the Department of Labor’s monitoring of compliance under the Fair Labor Standards Act and other federal non-discrimination requirements; and
* Increase and index the federal minimum wage to increase economic security for people with disabilities and their families.

*Vocational Rehabilitation*

* Increase funding for state vocational rehabilitation programs significantly above the required Consumer Price Index (CPI) level to ensure investment in transition to postsecondary opportunities, supported employment, customized employment, and workforce development programs that help our constituents find and keep jobs and have more career options; and build infrastructure and create incentives for employers that will expand work opportunities.

*Procurement and Contracting*

* Modernize the Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD) Act to expand competitive integrated employment opportunities and ensure that people with significant disabilities remain a priority for participation in the program;
* Ensure that federal funds are directed toward funding competitive integrated employment;
* Expand employment opportunities by establishing federal procurement preferences for all employers who employ people with disabilities; and
* Assure that federal government contractors prioritize the hiring of employees with disabilities, including individuals with I/DD.

*Employment Standards and Benefits*

* Support policies that expand workplace flexibility;
* Assure that part-time, supported, or periodic employees are included in any proposal that expands or extends fringe benefit coverage; and
* Expand access to family and medical leave and support paid leave policies, including by mandating employers to provide a reasonable amount of paid sick leave and requiring payers to recognize these costs in their reimbursement rates.

*Other*

* Assure that people with I/DD can access all relevant work programs, including business development opportunities;
* Provide training and technical assistance to service providers for the purpose of expanding and improving their capacity to provide supported employment, customized employment, and other supports and services that will enhance opportunities for integrated employment consistent with best, promising, and emerging practices;
* Require the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration to link youth transition services to support competitive integrated employment using youth resources, including internships and apprenticeships;
* Increase the number of people with disabilities employed by the federal government and federal contractors through streamlining hiring processes, strengthening affirmative action requirements, and improving education and recruitment efforts; and
* Fully implement the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program and State Medicaid plan Section 1915(i) option to promote competitive integrated employment.

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