

## Be AWARE:

On November 15, 2019, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a public briefing to discuss the law that enables Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to pay a Special Minimum Wage Provision 14(c) to people with disabilities in work training.

▪ You can view part of the Hearing at this site: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngfVu1GpC7o>  
You can find more information on the Commission and this Hearing at [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov)

- The Special Minimum Wage Provision 14c of the law is a vital tool that enables CRPs to offer work training programs for individuals with significant disabilities who choose to work in an environment where they have friendships, support and purposeful activity.
- Hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities benefit from work training programs.
- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is biased against work training programs and the use of the Special Minimum Wage Provision 14c. Of the 20 professionals on the panel, only 2 of them supported the importance of work training programs.

A report will follow this Hearing and it will recommend elimination of work training programs that use the Special Minimum Wage Provision 14c.

### ***WE MUST TAKE ACTION:***

- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is accepting comments on this issue by email or letter. Comments are due by December 15, 2019.
- If you value work training offered by your local CRP, it is vital to speak up!
- Family members, friends, self-advocates all must comment.
- Consider the following simple statements:
  - I work at (name of CRP) and I support 14(c)"
  - "I am a parent/ family member/caregiver/friend of an individual who works at a CRP, and I fully support 14(c).
  - Add your personal story!

#### SEND COMMENTS:

- Send your email to [subminimumwages@usccr.gov](mailto:subminimumwages@usccr.gov).
- Add a CC to your Federal Legislators <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials> and [ateamgrassroots@gmail.com](mailto:ateamgrassroots@gmail.com)
- Send letters to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 1150, Washington, D.C. 20425



Dear Commissioners,

A-Team Pennsylvania, is writing to you to offer our comments on the November 15, 2019 hearing on section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The A-Team is a national grassroots organization of intellectually disabled individuals who work at Community Rehabilitation Programs, and their parents, family members and caregivers. Our movement began in 2011 in Wisconsin, and we have since grown to have chapters in 18 states, with more states on the way. We formed because there was no organization representing us, the people directly affected not only by 14(c) policy but by the continued effort by many advocacy groups and government agencies to close down work center-based programs. Our voices are so often not heard or ignored in discussions about disability employment policy, so we greatly appreciate that you offered this opportunity for public comment.

Neil Romano once stated that “this is not about the families.” How do you think this makes those of us who serve as 24/7 caregivers for our disabled loved ones feel? Parents and families are accused of being unwilling to accept change, of having low expectations for our loved ones, of only needing to be educated on the benefits of “competitive integrated employment” and worst of all, of allowing our loved ones to be exploited and discriminated against. We love our disabled family members. We know them better than anyone. We struggle to determine what they want and what is right for them, and we would never allow them to be exploited or discriminated against. Normally, the victims of discrimination are the ones to complain. In this case, those utilizing the services of work centers- those supposedly being discriminated against- are the ones strongly defending them. Please think about that.

At your hearing, many executives, university professors and government officials testified, as well as some high functioning self-advocates. Glaringly missing from the testimonies were those directly affected by your decisions, i.e. those working at Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and their parents, family members and caregivers. During the public comment session, one parent of a CRP participant was there to speak. The words Linda Hau spoke could have been spoken by tens of thousands of us. I am sure you would realize it is difficult for our families to even learn of hearings such as the one you held, let alone travel from around the country to Washington D.C. to speak for 3 minutes. This is why we believe it is incumbent on you to reach out to us, to visit CRP’s and get to know some of the workers, to see that they are not in “gulags” as Mr. Romano told you, to see that staff members are not evil exploiters but rather wonderful people with the best intentions, and most importantly, to meet with parents, family members and caregivers.

A-Team Pennsylvania supports informed choice. We hope you will reflect on this, and not just conclude that we are making a bad choice. Any disabled person already has the right to pursue competitive integrated employment, and A-Team members fully support this employment choice for those who desire it, are capable of it and can find a job. The dignity of employment both in community rehabilitation programs (work centers) and competitive sites are important to self-worth. Yet some would say it is how much money you make that determines self-worth. CRP workers generally do not understand much, if anything, about money, the minimum wage or 14(c), other than that they love getting a paycheck and are proud of it. Our recommendation is that everyone focus on providing more opportunities for disabled individuals rather than on eliminating jobs that give meaning to the lives of so many significantly intellectually disabled individuals.

I am attending: \_\_\_\_\_ in Pennsylvania and

**FULLY SUPPORT 14C**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Individual Attending Program

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date