



May 20, 2024

The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Chair
United States Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chair
United States House Committee on
Education and the Workforce
2462 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Ranking
Member
United States Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking
Member
United States House Committee on
Education and the Workforce
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Sanders, Chair Foxx, Ranking Member Cassidy, and Ranking Member Scott:

The National Federation of the Blind, the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Americans, and SourceAmerica, an advocate for a more accessible and inclusive future of work, strongly support the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act, S.533/H.R.1263.

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act authorizes employers to pay their workers with disabilities subminimum wages. According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of May 1, 2024, at least 40,579 people with disabilities were still being paid below the minimum wage. To solve this problem, we urge Congress to pass the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act, S. 533/H.R. 1263, which would phase out, over a five-year period, this antiquated practice. During this phase-out period, there will be a freeze on applications for new certificates to ensure this employment model will be eliminated at the end of the fifth year.

Finally, in order to help ensure a smooth transition, the legislation includes provisions for a technical assistance center to help businesses transition away from paying subminimum wages as well as a competitive grant program that businesses can apply for during the transition period. SourceAmerica has experience assisting affiliated nonprofit agencies to phase out and eliminate the use of 14(c) certificates, which are no longer being used in the AbilityOne Program. Our efforts showcase the importance of technical and financial supports for employers and employees making that transition.

It is long past the time for our nation to move beyond this outdated model of disability employment, and into a new era of competitive and integrated employment for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark A. Riccobono". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Mark A. Riccobono, President
National Federation of the Blind

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Belden". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a long, horizontal tail.

Richard Belden, President and Chief Executive Officer
SourceAmerica