



November 27, 2024

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

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

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

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

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

We applaud the Committees' work on reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). As you are aware, this piece of legislation provides critical workforce support services for job seekers including people with disabilities.

SourceAmerica joins the leaders in the disability advocacy community in reiterating our support for including the bipartisan and bicameral legislation introduced by Senator Casey (D-PA), Senator Daines (R-MT), Chair McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), and Ranking Member Scott (D-VA); the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (TCIEA, S. 533 and H.R. 1263) in the final WIOA package. While we understand that the legislation is not part of the proposed bill package at this time, we strongly urge the Committees to reconsider including this important bipartisan and bicameral piece of legislation.

SourceAmerica[®] is a central nonprofit agency that facilitates the AbilityOne[®] Program for the Federal government - one of the largest sources of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. SourceAmerica has taken a leadership role in assisting nonprofit agencies in the Program to phase out and eliminate the use of 14(c) certificates. In March 2019, the Board of Directors voted to phase out the use of 14(c) certificates over a three-year period. We launched a 14(c) Transition Program to provide technical and financial resources to SourceAmerica affiliated nonprofit agencies to achieve this objective. The U.S. AbilityOne Commission subsequently issued a final rule that prohibited payment of subminimum wages on contracts within the AbilityOne Program, effective October 19, 2022. No 14(c) certificates are now being used in the Program. However, as of November 1, 2024, at least 37,200 people with disabilities were still being paid below the minimum wage outside of the AbilityOne Program.

Our 14(c) Transition Program demonstrated that, with the right package of tools and resources, employees who transitioned off 14(c) certificates can remain employed. By providing key technical assistance to help employers transition away from paying subminimum wages, as well as a competitive grant program for states to provide assistance for individuals to transition from 14(c), the federal government will improve the employment outcome for these individuals. Although several states have taken action to phase out subminimum wages within their states, it is important that Congress provides a national framework to phase out these policies that harm people with disabilities. We believe TCIEA provides the resources necessary to ensure people with disabilities can successfully transition off of 14(c) certificates. It is critical that TCIEA is included in the final WIOA package in order to advance the legislation in the 118th Congress and to protect the employment of people with disabilities across the country.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to join other leaders in the disability employment rights community in advocating for a new era of competitive and integrated employment for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Terrazas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ricardo Terrazas
Vice President, Government Affairs
SourceAmerica