



November 8, 2017

Senator Roy Blunt
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
260 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health & Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Under the current budget proposal for the Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education (ED), and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment State Grant program has been eliminated. The undersigned organizations are writing to express our grave concerns with the proposed discontinuation of this funding in the 2018 budget. We are requesting that funding be restored to at least the \$27.5 million level that is in the FY 2017 budget. Without this funding, the opportunity for individuals with significant disabilities to succeed in competitive integrated employment will be significantly curtailed.

The [Title VI Supported Employment State Grants](#) are federal funds provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to state vocational rehabilitation agencies for supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as psychiatric disabilities. As authorized by Congress under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), these grants fund supported employment services, including ongoing support services that enable individuals to obtain and succeed in competitive integrated employment.

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Our request that funding levels for the Title VI Supported Employment State Grants be restored to at least the FY 2017 level of \$27.5 million is based on the following points:

- **The Supported Employment State Grants support WIOA’s statutory intent:** Under WIOA, Congress was very clear that even individuals with the most significant disabilities can be successful in competitive integrated employment with the right types of assistance and supports. Eliminating funding for these very supports runs counter to the intent of the statute. To be successful in competitive integrated employment, individuals with significant disabilities need funding for these supports and services.
- **The Supported Employment State Grants support the Administration’s jobs agenda:** This Administration and Congress have been very clear in promoting a pro-jobs agenda, and the Supported Employment State Grants are very much aligned with this goal. These grants are an investment that enable individuals to become successfully employed and potentially reduce their reliance on costly public benefits. Per the most recently available data, on an annual basis, 15,400 individuals received services via the Supported Employment State Grants, with almost half using these funds for ongoing supports that allowed them to maintain employment.
- **SE State Grants are the only dedicated funding source for supported employment:** The Supported Employment State Grants are the only federal funds that are specifically allocated and fully dedicated to supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These funds are readily accessible to states because of there are no state match requirements.
- **WIOA Fully Supported the SE State Grant Program:** The Supported Employment State Grant program was reauthorized and updated by Congress through overwhelmingly bi-partisan support via WIOA. It was clearly the intent of Congress to continue the program, not end it. The potential ending of the State Supported Employment State Grant program funding is inconsistent with a commitment by Congress to supported employment, and employment of individuals with the most significant disabilities.



- **New youth provisions for SE program need to be maintained:** Under WIOA, Congress made clear that youth with significant disabilities must be given every opportunity to receive the necessary services that allow every opportunity to achieve competitive integrated employment. In support of this intent, states are now required (under WIOA) to spend at least 50% of their Supported Employment State Grant on youth with the most significant disabilities (and up to 4 years of extended supports for these youths can now be funded by public VR). If this funding was eliminated, this new and important commitment to youth with the most significant disabilities will disappear.
- **New requirements under WIOA have tightened funding for VR:** The Title VI Supported Employment State Grant allotment of \$27 million in federal funds is a relatively small amount compared to the \$3.1 billion in Title I Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds available to the states. However, under WIOA, state vocational rehabilitation programs must now allocate 15% of their funds to Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). While we fully support this allocation requirement, it has placed new restrictions on vocational rehabilitation funding. With the high demand for VR services, any loss of VR funding will have a significant impact in the ability of public VR to assist individuals to become successfully employed.

In summary, the elimination of the Supported Employment State Grant funding runs counter to Congressional intent under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, as well as the goals of this Administration: that every American is successfully employed in a good job at good pay, thereby reducing reliance on public benefits. We ask that this funding be fully restored.

Thank you for your full consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)
American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)
American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

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Association of University Centers on Disability (AUCD)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
Center for Public Representation (CPR)
Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD)
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)
Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD)
National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS)
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA)
National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Disability Institute (NDI)
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC)
National Organization on Disability (NOD)
Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)
Parent to Parent USA
TASH
The Arc of the United States
The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC)