



February 24, 2011

The Honorable Thomas Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
SD-131, Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

BY FAX – 202-224-1360

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities [CCD] Employment and Training Task Force, we are writing to express our strong objections to the Fiscal Year 2011 Continuing Resolution recently passed by the House of Representatives. Known as HR 1, this bill will have a devastating impact on many of the programs people with disabilities need in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities stood at 13.6 percent in January of this year, compared to 9.7 percent for those without disabilities. The workforce participation rate is even bleaker with only 20.1 percent of people with disabilities in the labor force compared to 69.5 percent for those without disabilities. Absent work opportunities, people with disabilities must rely on Social Security disability insurance and/or supplemental security income, making them among the poorest of Americans.

Yet, HR 1 completely eliminates funding for two programs – Projects with Industry [PWI] and Supported Employment – that are vital to assisting those with the most significant disabilities to obtain and retain employment. Moreover, it eviscerates the workforce development system that has only recently begun to respond to the needs of people with disabilities in need of job training and placement assistance.

For over forty years, the PWI program has placed tens of thousands of people with disabilities into competitive community jobs. Working with over 1500 businesses nationwide, Projects with Industry help to identify local workforce needs and to supply employers with qualified individuals with disabilities to meet their staffing requirements. A 2003 Department of Education evaluation of PWI found that, rather than duplicating services, these projects complement those of state vocational rehabilitation [VR] programs by providing direct placement assistance and ongoing follow up once VR training is completed. Many businesses have indicated that they would rather work with programs like PWI that can act as a bridge or “go between” rather than have the business work directly with a government program. If PWI ends, this important link between the employer community and people with disabilities will be broken.

Supported employment, which generally provides on-the-job support for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities, has a dedicated funding stream (\$29 million) under Title VI-B of the Rehabilitation Act. States typically use these funds for supports and services that go beyond those provided under their vocational rehabilitation system. Elimination of this money means that many states will simply cease offering these services to those with the most significant disabilities consigning them to expensive day habilitation programs with no hope of becoming tax-paying citizens.

In addition to these program terminations, HR 1 zeroes out all new funding for Workforce Investment Act [WIA] Title I formula grants for FY 2011, eliminates funds that states would receive on July 1 for the beginning of new program years and eliminates advance appropriations that states would receive on October 1, the beginning of the 2012 fiscal year. The House has also proposed reducing to \$221 million the \$3.8 billion devoted to training and employment services. The actions of the House appear to derive from a misunderstanding of how the workforce system functions with much of the so-called “unexpended” funds actually being monies obligated over several years for training services that are critical to helping people go back to work.

We urge you to reject the cuts in WIA funding. However, even as we ask that you undo the potential for damage wrought by HR 1, we recognize the serious fiscal circumstances in which our country finds itself. We realize that some sacrifice may be necessary and, to that end, we recommend that funding levels for Projects with Industry and Supported Employment be provided at those for fiscal year 2008. Although this will force some curtailment of services, it will at least sustain these programs so that they may continue to serve people with disabilities in the future.

If Congress is truly concerned about creating jobs and improving the employment rate – especially that for people with disabilities – HR 1 should go no further. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Co-Chairs, Employment and Training Task Force

Cheryl Bates-Harris, National Disabilities Rights Network

Alicia Epstein, NISH

Susan Goodman, National Down Syndrome Congress

Charlie Harles, International Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation

Susan Prokop, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Paul Seifert, Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation



February 24, 2011

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
SD-131, Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

BY FAX – 202-228-2321

Dear Senator Cochran:

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Yet, HR 1 completely eliminates funding for two programs – Projects with Industry [PWI] and Supported Employment – that are vital to assisting those with the most significant disabilities to obtain and retain employment. Moreover, it eviscerates the workforce development system that has only recently begun to respond to the needs of people with disabilities in need of job training and placement assistance.

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