



## **CONTACT YOUR SENATORS TODAY –**

### **Say “NO” to Section 511 of the Senate’s WIA Reauthorization Package**

#### **POLICY ISSUE: OVERVIEW**

The Senate HELP Committee recently introduced legislation that would reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which has not been reauthorized since 1998. This important legislation authorizes the general workforce development infrastructure of the U.S. Department of Labor, as well as establishes the country’s vocational rehabilitation system. The Senate HELP Committee leadership has expressed a strong commitment to using the WIA reauthorization as a legislative opportunity for improving employment outcomes of youth with significant disabilities transitioning into adulthood. This goal has been enthusiastically supported by a majority of the disability policy community, and we believe several of the bill’s provisions will greatly increase opportunities for youth with significant disabilities to work in competitive, integrated employment settings.

There is one provision, however, that puts all of these efforts at great risk and could potentially undermine the rest of the reauthorization bill. Section 511 of the Title V would create a systematic “check-list” for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system to use in determining whether a youth with a significant disability is capable of accomplishing an employment outcome. While the original intent of Section 511 was to reduce the number of youth with significant disabilities being deemed ineligible for VR services and placed into sheltered workshops to make subminimum wages, the ambiguity of the current language contains several loopholes that may inadvertently put more youth at risk. Furthermore, Section 511 provides no assurance that VR agencies offer and provide a minimum amount of supported employment services to these at-risk youth. Section 511, as currently written, puts youth with significant disabilities at greater risk of being unnecessarily placed in sheltered workshops and/or paid subminimum wages despite their potential to participate in the general workforce.

#### **REQUEST:**

**Please communicate either by email or telephone to legislative staff handling the WIA reauthorization for your Senators that Section 511 as currently written should be removed from the WIA Reauthorization bill prior to the Committee’s mark-up on July 13<sup>th</sup>.**

You may contact your Senate offices by calling the main Senate line at 202-224-3121. Once you have confirmed the name of the legislative staffer handling employment policy and the WIA reauthorization, you may either speak with them by phone, and/or send an email to them. The next page contains draft language for you to incorporate into your email and talking points should you wish to communicate your concerns by phone.

#### **DEADLINE:**

**Advocates are strongly encouraged to reach out to their Senate legislative staff contacts no later than Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> in order to have an impact on the Senate HELP Committee's scheduled mark-up of the legislation on 7/13.**

**DRAFT ADVOCACY EMAIL TO SENATE STAFF HANDLING EMPLOYMENT POLICY ISSUES & WIA REAUTHORIZATION:**

*As an advocate for the rights of citizens with significant disabilities to live and work in integrated community settings, I am writing to you today to ask for your assistance in getting Section 511 of the Senate's draft WIA reauthorization removed from the bill.*

*The vocational rehabilitation (VR) system should presume that all youth with significant disabilities are capable of competitive, integrated employment, and should focus supports toward helping these youth attain this preferred employment outcome. I understand and appreciate the Senate HELP Committee's efforts to improve employment outcomes of youth with significant disabilities who are transitioning into adulthood within the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). However, I am very concerned that current language in Section 511 of Title V of the WIA reauthorization bill will unintentionally lead to more youth with significant disabilities being unnecessarily placed into sheltered workshops and paid subminimum wages.*

*Section 511 provides a checklist of what a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor must do before deciding a youngster with significant disabilities is incapable of achieving a successful employment outcome – unfortunately, it does not require VR to offer and provide supported employment services. I am opposed to any legislative provisions in WIA that could open the door to more youth being sent to sheltered workshops and paid subminimum wage, and we believe Section 511 as currently written puts youth with the most significant disabilities at great risk.*

*We need your support to communicate to the Senate HELP Committee leadership request that Section 511 as currently written be removed from the WIA reauthorization bill. Please convey your concerns directly to the following staff of the Senate HELP Committee:*

**DEMOCRATIC CONTACTS**

- Office of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin  
(Chairman, Senate HELP Committee):  
[Andrew\\_Imparato@harkin.senate.gov](mailto:Andrew_Imparato@harkin.senate.gov)
- Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray  
[Scott\\_Cheney@help.senate.gov](mailto:Scott_Cheney@help.senate.gov);  
[Crystal\\_Bridgewater@help.senate.gov](mailto:Crystal_Bridgewater@help.senate.gov)

**REPUBLICAN CONTACTS**

- Office of U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (Ranking-Member, Senate HELP Committee):  
[Kelly\\_Hastings@help.senate.gov](mailto:Kelly_Hastings@help.senate.gov)
- Office of U.S. Senator Johnny Isaakson  
[Glee\\_Smith@isaakson.senate.gov](mailto:Glee_Smith@isaakson.senate.gov)

*Please communicate these concerns prior to the Committee's deliberations on this important legislation, which is scheduled for Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>. Thank you in advance for your time and immediate attention to this important policy issue.*

Name

Organization

Address

## **DRAFT TALKING POINTS FOR ADVOCACY PHONE CALLS TO SENATE STAFF:**

1. I believe that the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system should presume that all youth with significant disabilities are capable of competitive, integrated employment, and should focus supports toward helping these youth attain this preferred employment outcome.
2. I understand and appreciate the Senate HELP Committee's efforts to improve employment outcomes of youth with significant disabilities who are transitioning into adulthood within the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).
3. However, I am very concerned that current language in Section 511 of Title V of the WIA reauthorization bill will unintentionally lead to more youth with significant disabilities being unnecessarily placed into sheltered workshops and paid subminimum wages.
4. Section 511 provides a checklist of what a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor must do before deciding a youngster with significant disabilities is incapable of achieving a successful employment outcome – unfortunately, it does not require VR to offer and provide supported employment services.
5. I am opposed to any legislative provisions in WIA that could open the door to more youth being sent to sheltered workshops and paid subminimum wage, and we believe Section 511 as currently written puts youth with the most significant disabilities at great risk.
6. We need your support to communicate to the Senate HELP Committee leadership request that Section 511 as currently written be removed from the WIA reauthorization bill.
7. **Please convey your concerns directly to the following staff before the Senate HELP Committee's legislative mark-up of the WIA Reauthorization bill scheduled for Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>:**

### **DEMOCRATIC CONTACTS**

- Office of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin  
(Chairman, Senate HELP Committee):  
[Andrew\\_Imparato@harkin.senate.gov](mailto:Andrew_Imparato@harkin.senate.gov)
- Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray  
[Scott\\_Cheney@help.senate.gov](mailto:Scott_Cheney@help.senate.gov);  
[Crystal\\_Bridgewater@help.senate.gov](mailto:Crystal_Bridgewater@help.senate.gov)

### **REPUBLICAN CONTACTS**

- Office of U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (Ranking-Member, Senate HELP Committee):  
[Kelly\\_Hastings@help.senate.gov](mailto:Kelly_Hastings@help.senate.gov)
- Office of U.S. Senator Johnny Isaakson  
[Glee\\_Smith@isaakson.senate.gov](mailto:Glee_Smith@isaakson.senate.gov)

8. Thank you for your timely attention to this important matter and for your consideration of my request.