



March 5, 2014

Assembly Member Brian Maienschein
12396 World Trade Drive, Suite #118
San Diego, CA 92128

Dear Assembly Member Maienschein,

On behalf of the Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), the only national non-profit organization with an exclusive focus on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities, we would like to thank you for your introduction of AB 1626, which would restore rate cuts on supported employment back to 2008 levels. We applaud your efforts to improve integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by recognizing the importance of rates that promote quality supported employment services.

As you know, in California only 36.7% of working-age adults with a disability are in the workforce (either employed or unemployed) compared to 71.2% of those without a disability.¹ However, we know that individuals with disabilities want to join the workforce in integrated, community-based employment at minimum wage or higher, alongside their peers without disabilities, but many cannot due to barriers established in the current system.² By introducing AB 1626, you have taken an essential first step to making a clear legislative statement that rates should reflect California's commitment to ensuring Californians with disabilities can achieve a lifestyle that approximates that of individuals without disabilities.

As an organization that promotes policies which enhance the social and economic inclusion and empowerment of citizens with disabilities, APSE strongly supports the concept that all citizens deserve access to "real jobs with real wages." Through APSE's hard work, and from support from advocates around the country, we have seen twenty-six states adopt an official Employment First policy (based on legislation, policy directive, etc.).³ California has now joined this national movement that has been a catalyst for increasing the workforce participation rate for individuals with disabilities!

Although California has passed Employment First legislation, much more needs to be done to expand equitable employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in your state. AB 1626 would provide support to California's Employment First legislation and support the state's move away from sheltered work settings. These sheltered works environments are extremely expensive, segregated settings that pay people with disabilities a fraction of the minimum wage without effectively finding the people they serve jobs. As you may know, studies have found that individuals who participate in these programs earn significantly less (\$129.36 versus \$191.42 per week), and cost significantly more to serve (\$6,065.08 versus \$2,440.60), than their non-sheltered work setting peers in supported employment.⁴

¹ <http://statedata.info/statedatabook/>

² <http://www.thearc.org/document.doc?id=3672>

³ [http://www.apse.org/docs/Employment%20First%20List%209-13%20\(APSE%20version\).pdf](http://www.apse.org/docs/Employment%20First%20List%209-13%20(APSE%20version).pdf)

⁴ Cimera, Robert E., Michael West, Paul Wehman, and Sloane Burgess. "Do Sheltered Workshops Enhance Employment Outcomes for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder?" *Autism*, Jan. 2012.



We believe, that all working age adults and youth with disabilities deserve the right to work in jobs fully integrated within the general workforce, working side-by-side with co-workers without disabilities, earning minimum wage or higher. By introducing AB 1626, you have reaffirmed this statement by taking an essential step forward to improving employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your leadership and we hope to support you to boost awareness for this important legislation that will help increase funding for integrated employment in your state!

Sincerely,

Laura A. Owens, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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