



June 12, 2013

Tim White
WPRI-12
25 Catamore Boulevard
East Providence, RI 02914

Dear Mr. Tim White:

On behalf of the Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE), we would like to thank you for your extraordinary reporting concerning the sheltered workshop scandal at the Harold H. Birch Vocational School. As an organization that promotes national, state, and local policy development which enhances the social and economic inclusion of individuals with disabilities we greatly appreciate your leadership. Sadly, this is a problem in every state but your efforts and the hard work of WPRI-12 will help lead future investigations and media coverage into this harmful practice in other states and in similar programs.

APSE is the only national organization with an *exclusive focus* on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. As a growing national non-profit organization, we work hard to advocate for social change to help those with severe disabilities achieve a lifestyle that approximates that of individuals without disabilities. We strongly affirm the belief that the practice of paying students with disabilities sub-minimum wage is a national issue that instills a false sense of low expectations and a life of segregation and exploitation for people with disabilities.

In 2009, APSE took a strong stance calling for the phase out of sub-minimum wage by 2014. A key focus of our efforts to phase out sub-minimum wage was to end the use of sub-minimum wage for students entering the world of work, including: a) elimination of the use of special wage certificates (14(c)) for students currently in school; b) elimination of placements in jobs using 14(c) certificates as a post-secondary outcome. When schools like the Harold H. Birch Vocational School segregate and exploit students with disabilities this discrimination perpetuates the misconceptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities which follow them into adulthood.

APSE, has 37 chapters, representing nearly 3,000 members made up of, and working on behalf of, Americans with disabilities, from all 50 states, and we would welcome any opportunity to provide you with additional information. Thank you again for your exemplary dedication to journalist excellence to help abolish the unjust and discriminatory practice of paying workers as low as 3 cents an hour.

Sincerely,

The Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (APSE)

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