



Statement for the Record From
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
For
The House Education and Workforce Hearing on
Work, Dignity, and Choice in Disability Employment
February 13, 2026

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the Record regarding the importance of competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. We firmly believe that all individuals with disabilities should be fully integrated in the workforce and paid fair, competitive wages. Yet, tens of thousands continue to receive subminimum wages and/or work in segregated settings.

NDRN and our nationwide network of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) agencies have been a driving force behind national efforts to advance workforce inclusion for people with disabilities. In particular, we have been [vocal and adamant](#) in our call to eliminate section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which permits employers to pay certain people with disabilities less than the applicable federal minimum wage, as well as ensuring integration of people with disabilities in the workforce.

NDRN has documented ongoing concerns about segregated employment and subminimum wages in two reports: [Segregated and Exploited](#) and [Beyond Segregated and Exploited](#), as well as in the award-winning film [Bottom Dollars](#). Over the years, evidence gathered by NDRN and the P&A/CAP Network has consistently shown that people with disabilities can thrive in a competitive and integrated environment, and that high expectations and providing individuals with needed services and supports is an effective model to obtain, maintain, and advance in a career.

Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), enacted in 1938, reflects an outdated medical model of disability. Through the decades society has moved toward the social model of disability recognizing that reasonable accommodations and higher expectations are understood as precursors to higher achievement. This shift has contributed to historic reductions in unemployment rates among people with disabilities, with the rate reaching 7.2% in 2023, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). Given

these higher expectations, the [proven inefficacy of 14\(c\)](#), and the availability of effective alternatives to sheltered workshops, multiple federal agencies, including the [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#) (USCCR) and the [National Council on Disability](#) (NCD), have recommended phasing out 14(c) of the FLSA.

In 2014, Congress, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), reinforced the federal commitment to competitive, integrated employment and the services and supports necessary to achieve it. In order to realize competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities, particularly for individuals with significant support needs, businesses currently paying subminimum wages to people with disabilities require resources, training and technical assistance, as well as overall support.

For these reasons, NDRN and the P&A/CAP Network support the bipartisan Transformation to Competitive and Integrated Employment Act (TCIEA), H.R.4771/S.2438. This legislation would implement the goals laid out in WIOA by providing grants to states or employers to transition away from subminimum wage practices, prohibit new 14(c) certificates, and phase out subminimum wage employment over five years. TCIEA would also establish a technical assistance center to help employers adopt competitive, integrated business models and effectively leverage programs such as Medicaid home and community-based services to support people with complex disabilities.

Nearly 90 years after its creation, 14(c) no longer reflects modern expectations or the demonstrated capabilities of people with disabilities. It is time to phase out this outdated, discriminatory, obsolete employment practice and advance into a 21st-century workforce where people with disabilities are fully integrated and paid competitive wages.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the Record. For further information, please contact Stephanie Flynt McEben, public policy analyst, at Stephanie.McEben@ndrn.org.