



The Honorable Timothy Walberg
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Walberg,

A-TEAM Arkansas is a state chapter of the national A-TEAM advocacy group. We are a grassroots organization made up of individuals with disabilities, family members/caregivers, and service providers. Advocating for choice and bringing awareness related to disability employment and housing choice is our cornerstone. We believe in a array of services and supports in order to provide the best outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

We were thrilled to hear that Congressman Glenn Grothman has introduced HR 8736, *The Restoration of Employment Choice for Adults with Disabilities Act*. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed in 2014 placed restrictions on the use of commensurate wages, specifically targeting individuals with disabilities between the ages of 18-24 years old. While the intention was not bad, the law requires this demographic to jump to hoops, so to speak, before being able to choose to work in a community rehabilitation program under a Section 14(c) special wage certificate. This includes efforts, regardless of the individual's desires or abilities, to secure Competitive Integrated Employment. Not only are desires and abilities not taken into consideration, neither is safety. Disabilities are a spectrum, and services and supports are never one-size-fits-all. For some, limiting employment choice does not feel inclusive, but rather exclusive.

We celebrate success when a person with disabilities is able to compete in the regular job market and secure employment that is. We also realize that most businesses are not structured around accommodations for individual with *severe* intellectual and physical disabilities. Trying to force these individuals into the same box as others is simply inequitable. It is imperative that they are afforded opportunities for employment that are *realistic and safe* for them.

HR 8736 will do just what the title says – restore employment choice – for a group of vulnerable individuals for whom choice was taken away when WIOA went into effect ten years ago. It's time to modify requirements and restore choice. Thank you for your willingness to hear all sides of the issue, including what the individuals served face as a reality every day. We look forward to seeing this commonsense bill pass and be signed into law!

Respectfully,

Carissa O'Bryant
A-TEAM Arkansas Member