



Mark Hall
Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, ServiceSource
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Good morning Chairman Connolly, Ranking Member Meadows, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me today to speak to you regarding the impacts of the Federal shutdown on my agency, our employees, and the AbilityOne Program. My name is Mark Hall and I am Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer for ServiceSource, headquartered in Oakton, Virginia.

ServiceSource is an affiliate group of five 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations with a mission to facilitate services and partnerships that support people with disabilities, their families, their caregivers, and community members in order to build more inclusive communities. We were founded in the early 1970s by a small group of parents who wanted to create opportunities for their children and other adults with disabilities. Since those early days, the organization has grown to serve more than 25,000 individuals annually.

The AbilityOne Program is the largest source of employment for the people we serve and for individuals with significant disabilities across the United States. The AbilityOne Program began in 1938 with passage of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act and was broadened to include people with significant disabilities in 1971. Today, more than 45,000 Americans who are blind or have significant disabilities are employed through a national network of over 550 nonprofit agencies, including ServiceSource. The impact and importance of the jobs provided to people with disabilities through procurement in the AbilityOne program cannot be overstated.

For more than 40 years, ServiceSource has been a trusted provider of services to the Federal Government through the AbilityOne Program. Today, ServiceSource employs more than 1,200 people with significant disabilities on 80 AbilityOne contracts in 13 states and Washington, D.C. These employees perform mail services, document management, help desk, total facilities management, logistics, and food services for 41 Federal Government Agencies, including all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The majority of individuals working on ServiceSource's AbilityOne projects are in contracts providing basic government services. In jobs such as mail clerks, military dining attendants, and administrative support, they earn an average wage of over \$13 an hour, and each additionally receives \$4.27 in hourly health and welfare fringe benefits. While these are good entry level wages, many of the individuals working on ServiceSource's AbilityOne contracts—like many Americans—are forced to live paycheck-to-paycheck. These individuals and their families experienced the greatest impact, both during and after the shutdown.

During the 35 days of the government shutdown, 79 employees working on ten of our AbilityOne contracts were furloughed. Of course, employee morale suffered and high levels of stress were shared by many. While these employees were forced to stay home, work piled up awaiting their return. With no end to the shutdown in sight, employees experienced uncertainty and anxiety about their ability to meet basic living expenses.

In response, as an organization, we committed to paying employees' wages and benefits from our reserves for the first two weeks of the shutdown. During the next two pay periods, some employees were able to use their limited vacation time for partial pay and others—with no vacation—went without pay. As a



large, diversified organization, ServiceSource was able to provide critical health and welfare benefits, but I personally know individuals in other organizations who were not so fortunate.

During the shutdown, our team maintained frequent contact with employees to assess their wellbeing, identify needs, and assist those in crisis. As a result, we learned that some employees needed assistance with securing food items and paying rent. ServiceSource organized a *Cans for Contractors* drive to secure food and other necessary items for employees and their families who were unable to shop during the 35 day long shutdown. We also reached out to our ServiceSource Foundation for additional financial support.

The ServiceSource Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to provide financial supports for the people and programs of ServiceSource. When the Foundation and our Board of Directors learned of the overwhelming consequences of the shutdown, they stepped forward to meet the needs of our employees. Through the Foundation's support, ServiceSource was able to provide each employee with backpay after the shutdown concluded. However, this decision affects the Foundation's ability to provide support for other needed services, such as housing, therapy, veterans programs, and autism programs.

While ServiceSource eventually received reimbursement from three of the ten contracts impacted, ServiceSource lost more than \$300,000 in contract revenue during the shutdown.

I am proud of all that we did to support our employees during the shutdown.

I am also proud of our employees' advocacy efforts throughout the shutdown. Let me take a moment to tell you about one individual, Fred Pickett, who was particularly outspoken.

Fred has worked for ServiceSource for more than 27 years and, as a Mail Clerk at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is one of the Federal contractors impacted by the government shutdown. He is deeply committed to his career at the EPA where he has decades-long relationships with his colleagues, including EPA employees.

Like many of us, Fred finds fulfillment in his work and takes great pride in supporting the government. Fred was interviewed by the media—including print, television, and radio—and was active on Capitol Hill. Fred's message was clear, he was frustrated with a broken routine, and upset that he was caught in the middle of a political fight through no fault of his own. Despite this, Fred missed serving the Federal Government and working with his colleagues at the EPA.

I personally know Fred appreciates the time that you are investing into learning more about the impacts of the shutdown and preventing future work disruptions.

Fred and more than 2,000 individuals employed through the AbilityOne Program experienced loss of work or a reduction in hours in addition to personal and financial consequences. The loss of income during the shutdown jeopardized their ability to pay bills; provide food and shelter for themselves and family members; and maintain quality of life.

Congress passed legislation to provide back pay to federal government employees—federal contract workers, especially AbilityOne employees, deserve equitable treatment and should be eligible for back pay like their federal counterparts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic and the realities faced by those employed through the AbilityOne Program.