



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF CONNECTICUT

477 Connecticut Boulevard, Suite 217, East Hartford, Connecticut 06108
Telephone: (860) 289-1971 • Fax: (860) 291-2795 • www.nfbct.org
Elizabeth Rival, President

Labor & Public Employees Committee Testimony in Favor of House Bill 5279

The National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut supports House Bill 5279, An Act Eliminating the Minimum Fair Wage Exception for Certain Citizens of Connecticut. The State of Connecticut State Statutes currently allows our Commissioner to grant exceptions to employers, permitting them to pay workers with disabilities less than the minimum wage. This is based on the false assumption that disabled workers are less productive than nondisabled workers, but successful employment models have emerged in the last seventy-five years to assist people with significant disabilities in acquiring the job skills needed for competitive work.

This discriminatory policy is not necessary for the successful operation of a disability-training program. In reality, the overwhelming majority of the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) affiliates operates successfully without paying subminimum wages. Countless entities have successfully transitioned their subminimum wage business model of low expectations to an innovative model of competitive integrated training and employment, meeting the growing needs of mainstream employers with the proven talents of employees with disabilities. Only outdated workshops argue they will be unable to manage worthwhile programs.

The subminimum wage model fails to provide adequate training or employment to disabled workers. Data shows that less than five percent of workers with disabilities in segregated subminimum wage workshops will transition into competitive integrated work. Moreover, research shows that the subminimum wage model costs more but actually produces less! It is poor policy to reward such failed programs with wage exemptions, preferential federal contracts, and public and charitable contributions.

Please pass Raised House Bill 5279.

For more information contact:

National Federation of the Blind of Connecticut
Elizabeth Rival, President
Phone: (860) 289-1971
Email: Info@nfbct.org