



The Arc
Quinebaug Valley

Achieve with us.

"For people with intellectual, developmental and other life-affecting disabilities."

February 26, 2014

RE: HB 5279 AN ACT ELIMINATING THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN CITIZENS OF CONNECTICUT

The Arc Quinebaug Valley, Inc. supports "real wages for real work" for all individuals with developmental disabilities. However, it is our belief that HB 5279, if passed, will put many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities out of work. While this bill might seem to be the right thing to do on the surface, it is strictly a feel good bill without regard to the number of individuals who will likely be adversely affected if it passes.

There are a number of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want to work but are unable to work to the capacity of an employee who does not have a disability – a typical worker. Some individuals may not be able to meet performance standards or perform every function that a job may require. However, they want to work, they want to be a contributing member of society and they want to feel pride in what they are able to accomplish. Permitting the subminimum wage certificate allows individuals to be paid at the capacity at which they are able to work by using time studies to determine the appropriate wage. If the wage certificate is eliminated, then we, as an employer, would have to pay a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities who might be working at 50% of the capacity of a "typical worker", the same rate that the typical worker is getting. This would put a large strain on employers which will in turn lead to the unemployment of many individuals with I/DD.

As you get ready to vote on this bill, please consider the pros and cons and be aware that many individuals will be adversely affected if this bill passes. At this time, individuals with I/DD have an unemployment rate that is currently between 70 and 80 percent – and that is with the subminimum wage certificate. If the certificate is revoked, the number of unemployed individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will only increase. The certificate allows private providers and employers in the state to offer opportunities for individuals with disabilities to be employed and paid a salary commensurate with their abilities. At this agency alone, and we are a small agency, 42 individuals will be out of work if this bill passes. These individuals, who want to work and be contributing members of their communities, will not have the opportunities for work, will have no place to go on a daily basis and could lose the opportunity to become independent and live their lives with dignity and choice.

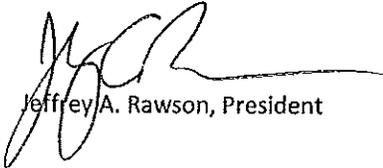
We support working toward equality for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life, including wages. Work is a valued activity for both the individual and society. The reality of what the passage of this bill will mean to individuals with I/DD is very complex. There needs to be a thoughtful approach to examining the subminimum wage certificate. It cannot be done in one fell swoop with a bill like HB 5279. This bill, as is, violates the fundamental tenets of public policy for individuals with disabilities – self-determination, informed choice and person-centered planning.

Individuals with I/DD take great pride in their work and have commitment to their jobs. They have little opportunity to work and live among their peers. Passage of this bill will take away the small opportunities that they now have and take away their ability to be contributing members of society.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

THE ARC QUINEBAUG VALLEY, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JAR', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeffrey A. Rawson, President