



CPSD
Real lives. Real work.

Collaboration
to Promote
Self-Determination

October 2, 2013

The Honorable Gregg Harper
307 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Harper,

As partners of the Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination (CPSD), an advocacy network of 18 national disability organizations who have come together to bring about a significant modernization of the federal adult system of services and supports for persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we are writing to thank you for introducing the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act of 2013 (H.R. 831) and to express our strong support and endorsement of this important legislation.

As you know, current law (under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act) allow public and private employers who obtain special certificates from the Department of Labor's Wage & Hour Division to compensate workers with significant disabilities at rates below the current federal minimum wage based on the individual's level of measured productivity. CPSD believes this archaic policy fuels unwarranted wage exploitation of workers with disabilities and reinforces unfair, arbitrary standards of productivity for workers with significant disabilities that non-disabled workers are not required to meet. This discriminatory policy forces hundreds of thousands of workers with disabilities into a life of poverty upon which they are chronically dependent on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other public benefits to make up the differential between what they should be earning commensurate with the position and the wages of their colleagues and what they are actually paid.

The Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination supports the implementation of a balanced, comprehensive approach to systems change, which includes as a key component the eventual phasing out of subminimum wage and wage deduction provisions under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. As such we strongly endorse this legislation.

We share your enthusiasm to ensure that all citizens living with significant disabilities have a broad range of opportunity to seek and gain meaningful competitive, integrated employment opportunities. We believe that citizens with significant disabilities are capable of being employed in integrated settings at the same wage levels as their non-disabled colleagues in similar positions. CPSD has long advocated for a Federal commitment to increase and improve integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities through federal policies that will lead to a significant and systematic reduction in the dependence on subminimum wages. As such, we strongly endorse this legislation.

We applaud your leadership in introducing the Fair Wages for Workers with Disabilities Act (H.R. 831). Citizens with significant disabilities deserve more in the way of opportunities to live

productive, economically self-sufficient, fulfilling lives in fully integrated community settings, and we as a country can do better to help support this vision. We look forward to working with you and your staff in the months and years ahead to develop the comprehensive, holistic policy reforms necessary to create federal policy focused on the highest expectations of workers with disabilities – something that we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

APSE

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

Autism Society

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)

Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)

Japanese Americans Citizens League

National Disability Rights Network

National Down Syndrome Congress

National Down Syndrome Society

National Fragile X Foundation

National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities (NOND)

Parent to Parent USA

Physician Parent Caregivers

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

TASH