



Lea Dias, President ▪ Daniel B. Frye, President-Elect ▪ Bill Robinson, Treasurer ▪ Katy Morris, Secretary

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

November 27, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
Russell Senate Office Building, 317 Delaware Ave NE
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles "Chuck" Schumer, Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan,
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader
235 Cannon Hob
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Impact of Tax Cuts on Vocational Rehabilitation

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer and Representatives Ryan and Pelosi:

I am writing on behalf of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). The NCSAB is comprised of the Directors of State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Programs that provide employment and independent living services to blind Americans. We are writing to express our serious concerns about the potential elimination of the public VR program as a result of proposed Senate and House tax reform actions.

While neither the House nor the Senate tax plans expressly eliminate the VR program, the potential high costs projected by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), at least in the initial years, would, under current law, trigger the Pay As You Go (PAYGO) rules. Under PAYGO, a new proposal must either be "budget neutral" or offset with savings derived from existing funds. According to the CBO, the House and Senate tax bills would result in an estimated \$1.5 trillion deficit in tax revenue which in turn would trigger PAYGO.

When spending is greater than the established discretionary caps and net costs for a year are negative (thereby increasing the debt)— the Office for Management and Budget (OMB) is required to implement

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the sequestration of mandatory programs, required by the Budget Control Act of 2011, to make up for that cost. Given the size of the proposed tax cuts (\$1.5 trillion), proposed tax reform would trigger a sequestration level so high that it would entirely eliminate funding for mandatory programs subject to sequestration, including the VR program.

The public VR program provides federal support to assist states in operating VR programs for people with disabilities to help them prepare for, secure, regain, or retain employment. The VR program annually serves one million people with disabilities. As a result of the public VR program, people with disabilities, including blind and visually impaired individuals, are assisted to prepare for and attain competitive and integrated employment leading to economic self-sufficiency.

Because vocational rehabilitation services enable persons who are blind to become or remain employed, cuts to vocational rehabilitation will have a negative fiscal impact on the Social Security trust fund, as well as other federal programs that provide benefits to persons with disabilities such as Medicaid and Medicare.

Blind and visually impaired people are among America's most unemployed and underemployed citizens. Eliminating the only nationwide source of employment training and supports will only further disenfranchise an already significantly disenfranchised segment of the population—one with no other source of help.

We urge you to consider the critical role the VR program plays in assisting people with disabilities, including blind and visually impaired individuals, to attain competitive employment and to free themselves from the need for public support. Any proposal that would trigger cuts to VR funding will have a direct and proportionate reduction in the availability of essential employment related training and services for people with disabilities.

We appreciate your serious consideration of our concerns. If we can provide additional information about the VR program and its impact on the lives of blind people and others with disabilities, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Lea Dias, President
National Council of State Agencies for the Blind