

## Testimony for the Purchasing Council . 3 August 2016

My name is Sara Du Terroil and I am giving testimony in support of and on behalf of my son Alexander Du Terroil who is diagnosed with autism, intellectual disability, speech delay, cortical visual impairment and who will be in continuing education within his local school district until the age of 21.

### **About Alexander**

Alexander is an affectionate boy, who loves swimming, basketball, and hanging out with friends. He enjoys playing with cars and watching anything with wheels. He thrives on structured routines and seeing familiar faces in his day-to-day life at school, therapies and favorite places.

At ten years old Alexander will soon begin his transition planning for vocational life.

### **Life purpose**

From the moment they are born and as they grow, we begin to recognize the interests, strengths and personalities of our children. Children with disabilities are no different, they will develop and show preferences in the same way. They may have more challenges and hurdles to overcome in terms of connecting with other individuals and sometimes breakdown of tasks but this should not detract from their basic civil rights.

As his mother what I want for Alexander is no different than for his 3 year old and 7 year old siblings - that they be happy and healthy, have meaningful opportunities for work and play, and live as independently as possible. The stated goal of IDEA which governs special education is "to prepare for further education and employment".

Yet eighty-five percent of working-age individuals with disabilities are either unemployed or underemployed. Of the 15% that are employed, only half are working in inclusive jobs in the community.

Awareness of autism is increasing and support programs for college-ready persons with autism are being developed, but for those persons who also have an intellectual disability, the employment landscape has not been as forward looking and I was shocked to read recently that it remains the case that individuals with disabilities can be paid not just less than minimum wage, but a minute fraction of a minimum wage.

One of the great positives of being a parent of a child with significant challenges is that you learn not to give up hope about what your child will achieve. In other words, they might be on a different path, where they will do things at their own pace

Equalizing the minimum wage has the following impact:

- Sets the standard for acceptance and equality which not only benefits employees but also improves business standing with customers (for example a grandparent, sibling, teacher - who may be familiar with persons with disabilities and who would be shocked if they knew that they could be paid less than minimum wage)
- It aligns state practices with many federal initiatives designed not just to increase the rate of employment but also to increase the accountability of day programs for truly meaningful opportunities for community participation.

Please end this discriminatory practice to ensure equality of opportunity for my child and others like him. Any historic "justification" is simply no longer sustainable in light of best practices and societal expectations for community inclusion. It's the right thing to do! Everybody should have the opportunity to work for Texas and we want Texas to work for everybody.

Sincerely,

Sara Du Terroil  
Mother of Alexander

Testimony #2

Good Moring too you all.

I am going to talk about how paying sub-minimum wage affects a person with a disability.

First thing is very long time ago, I used to work at workshop program for 7 years. I was first placed in a workshop program while in school. No one asked me if I wanted to go there. I remember my first pay check only 7.70 after working for two full weeks. After I got done with high school, I worked there for four more years. In 1990, I discovered self-advocacy. **It** helped me talk about choice in my life. Making choice to find a job in my community with help, like a supported employment person. If was working in a workshop still today, there would be many things in the community I wouldn't be able to do. One my favorite things is racing slot cars. Here is slot cars these cars not cheap at all. **It** would take me many years to buy these things.

This is just one example of being a part of my community that getting paid sub-minimum wage would not allow me to do. I fear that getting paid sub-minimum wage forces people into poverty, and that takes away their opportunities for community interaction, like slot car racing.

With jobs that paid minimum wage, I was able to live in my community. I didmy vista job for 2 years. That helped me get other jobs teaching advocacyskills too my peers. No one should pay a workshop to go to their program. We want community jobs that pays at least minimum wage. Invest more money in supported employment.

Thank you for your time today and for hearing my story.

## **PROPOSED PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

### **COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM**

1. The percentage of individuals with disabilities participating in the program who are placed in competitive positions outside the program.
  - Report: Annually
  - Target: 5% w/ minimum 1 employee
2. Number of hours dedicated to employment placement and/or counseling services for CRP employee with disabilities.
  - Report: Annually
  - Target: Minimum 2 hours a month
3. Number of hours dedicated to training on professional development that would assist employees with disabilities advancing within the organization or accepts employment outside the program.
  - Report: Quarterly
  - Target: Minimum 2 hours per month or 3 days a year

### **CENTRAL NONPROFIT AGENCY**

1. Number of professional development training/session conducted for CRP employees statewide where CRPs cannot provide training.
    - Report: Annually
  2. Number of classes, counseling, and training sessions developed for use by CRPs
    - Report: Annually
    - Target: 4 per year
  3. Increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by adding new products, services or continue outside placement opportunities.
    - Report: quarterly
    - Target: 3% annual increase.
  4. Improve customer satisfaction with products and services
    - Report: Annually
    - Target: 5%
  5. Central Nonprofit Agency, working with the Texas Workforce Commission, will work to reduce the number of complaints from state agencies for all products and services sold through the state use program.
    - Report: Semi-Annual
    - Target: 5%
  6. Throughout the year the CNA will provide state-wide, regional, online or one-on- one training programs required by TWC for employees participating in the program.
    - TWC Regions
- Other possible goals?
- Decrease the number of transferred contracts a year.
- Report: Annual

- Target 5%

Decrease the number of Product and Service Exceptions reported by state agencies per year.

- Report: Annual
- Target 5%