

Advisory Committee On Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment  
For Individuals with Disabilities (ACICIEID)

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Public Comment

Michael Gamel-McCormick, Ph.D.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Committee. I am Michael Gamel-McCormick, associate executive director for research and policy at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. In my previous role I served on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, under the leadership of Sen. Tom Harkin, in the role of senior education advisor and disability policy director.

During all of my almost five years with the HELP Committee I worked on the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, specifically with title IV and directly on section 609 of the law, which created this committee.

I offer my comments today to provide the now appointed committee with information about the intent of the bi-partisan committee and of my former boss regarding this committee, its tasks, and the desired outcome.

- First, this committee was conceptualized in order to address the drastically low unemployment rate and the even lower workforce participation rate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While other people with disabilities experience extraordinarily low rates of workforce participation and unemployment, those with ID and DD have the lowest employment rates and the lowest compensation rates. The bi-partisan staff and Sen. Harkin recognized this fact and specifically included this provision in the law in order to address this problem.
- Second, this committee was created to increase competitive, integrated employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as those with other complex disabilities. Again, those with ID and DD are the least likely to be participating in competitive integrated employment and this committee was created to address that problem.
- Third, this committee was created to help programs and agencies offering subminimum wage programs to transition to provide competitive integrated employment options and supports for people with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The staff recognize the resources and capacity of programs and agencies currently using 14(c) certificate and think that those programs can be resources to transition from subminimum wage activities to competitive integrated employment options.
- Finally, the committee staff saw, as the production of this committee, a clear plan that includes legislative, regulatory, contracting, and bully pulpit activities to increase competitive integrated employment for people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities. We envisioned a plan that would include recommended legislation, grant programs from departments, regulatory strategies that would increase wraparound supports to enable individuals to work, and suggestions for aggressive examples of federal agencies acting as models for competitive integrated workplaces for people with ID and DD. We envisioned a plan that could be put in place by Congress, the executive branch, and be touted by leaders at the federal and state levels.