

Annual Report to Authorizing and Appropriations Committees on the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division Section 14(c) Program

This U.S. Department of Labor (Department or DOL) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) annual report is submitted to the House and Senate authorizing and appropriations Committees¹ in response to the Explanatory Statement regarding H.R. 1865, Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94).² The statement provides that:

WHD shall collect data at the beginning of each fiscal year and submit in an electronic format yearly reports to the authorizing and appropriations Committees that shall include the following: (1) the name and address of each employer holding a certificate under 29 U.S.C. 214(c); (2) the starting date and ending date of each certificate for each employer under 29 U.S.C. 214(c); (3) information about the certificate for each employer under 29 U.S.C. 214(c), including if the certificate is an initial certificate or renewal and if the certificate is issued or pending; and (4) the current number of workers paid a subminimum wage by the employer holding the certificate under 29 U.S.C. 214(c) at the time of data collection. WHD is further directed to brief the authorizing and appropriations Committees, within 90 days of enactment of this Act, on its administration, monitoring, and enforcement of the subminimum wage program authorized under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

As requested, WHD conducted a briefing to both the authorizing and appropriations Committees on its administration, monitoring, and enforcement of the section 14(c) subminimum wage program on March 11, 2020.

Background on FLSA Section 14(c) and WHD's Administration of the Program

WHD administers and enforces several labor standards laws that cover private, state, and local government employment. Among them, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time workers.

The FLSA allows payment of wage rates below the generally applicable statutory minimum wage “to the extent necessary to prevent curtailment of opportunities for employment.” 29 U.S.C. 214(c). FLSA section 14(c) authorizes employers, after receiving a certificate from the Department, to pay certain employee wages that are less than the Federal minimum wage if their earning or productive capacity is limited as a result of a disability. The lower wage rate is permitted under limited conditions and only under certificates issued by the Department.

¹ Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education; House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education; Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; and, House Committee on Education and Labor.

² See Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 - *Committee Print of the House Committee on Appropriations on H.R. 1865/Public Law 116-94 - [Legislative Text and Explanatory Statement]*, at p. 93 (Jan. 2020), available at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CPRT-116HPRT38679/pdf/CPRT-116HPRT38679.pdf>.

Annual Report to Authorizing and Appropriations Committees on the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division Section 14(c) Program

Responsibility for administering and enforcing section 14(c) of the FLSA has been delegated to WHD.³ The Department’s regulations governing the issuance and enforcement of section 14(c) certificates describe WHD’s role in enforcing and achieving compliance with the section 14(c) requirements.⁴ WHD enforces and ensures employers’ compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements of section 14(c) through the issuance of guidance materials, review of applications for 14(c) certificates, outreach to stakeholders, and the investigation of 14(c) certificate holders.

Certification

Section 14(c) is a certificate-based program. The certificate application requires employers to provide WHD information about themselves and a snapshot of information about the way they use or seek to use the subminimum wage program. Each application is reviewed to determine whether WHD will issue or deny a certificate. Certificates are issued to an employer and are not issued to individual employees or groups of employees. A certificate authorizes an employer to participate in the program, however a certificate does not provide the employer with a good faith defense should violations of section 14(c) or other provision of applicable law be found during an investigation of the employer.

Certificates issued by WHD have both an effective date and an expiration date. To remain authorized to pay subminimum wages, the employer must properly and timely file an application for renewal with WHD before the expiration of its certificate. Applicants submit renewal applications in the same manner as an initial application but are required to provide additional information. If an application for renewal has been properly and timely filed with WHD, an existing subminimum wage certificate remains in effect and the employer’s authority to pay subminimum wages continues until the application for renewal has been granted or denied. When a certificate expires and no application for renewal has been properly and timely filed, an employer is required to pay all workers covered by the FLSA at least the full minimum wage for all hours worked after the certificate expiration date. A certificate will not be issued retroactively to cover a time period prior to the receipt of the application.

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

On September 26, 2023, the Department announced it would conduct a comprehensive review of the section 14(c) program. As part of this review, in October and November 2023, the Department held a series of stakeholder engagement sessions with other agencies, organizations, advocates, families, workers with disabilities, and service providers to listen to their experiences with section 14(c).

³ See Sec’y of Labor’s Order No. 01-2014, Delegation of Authority and Assignment of Responsibility to the Administrator, Wage and Hour Division (Dec. 19, 2014), 79 Fed. Reg. 77,527, 2014 WL 7275751 (Dec. 24, 2014).

⁴ See 29 U.S.C. § 214(c) and 29 C.F.R. Part 525; *see, e.g.*, 29 C.F.R. 525.9 (identifying the criteria for the issuance of a section 14(c) certificate); 29 C.F.R. 525.12 (outlining the terms and conditions of the certificate); 29 C.F.R. 525.17 (setting forth the standard for WHD to revoke certificates); 29 C.F.R. 525.19 (authorizing WHD to investigate prior to taking any action regarding the certificate).

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On December 4, 2024, the Department published a [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) preliminarily concluding that subminimum wages are no longer necessary to prevent the curtailment of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and thus proposing to amend 29 CFR part 525 to phase out the issuance of section 14(c) certificates. See 89 Fed. Reg. 96466 (Dec. 4, 2024); see also [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking: Employment of Workers with Disabilities Under Section 14\(c\) of the Fair Labor Standards Act | U.S. Department of Labor](#) for more information on the Department's preliminary findings and proposal.

Requested Data

The data requested is provided, as of October 1, 2024, in the accompanying Excel file. The Excel file reflects the employers who currently hold or have applied for certificates issued under section 14(c). The file contains the following information: certificate type, employer name, employer address, whether the application for the certificate was an initial or renewal application, whether the employer indicated it held government contracts covered by either the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act (PCA) or the McNamara O'Hara Service Contract Act (SCA) at the time of application, and the number of workers with disabilities who were paid subminimum wages by the certificate holder during their most recently completed fiscal quarter. The list also includes the status of the certificate and certificate starting and ending dates. For certificates in "pending" status, some columns are blank. All data is displayed for issued certificates.

The list includes 714 employers with an issued certificate—who reported paying 37,875 workers at subminimum wages in their previously completed fiscal quarter—and 48 employers with a pending certificate application.

Contextual Information on the Data

WHD currently receives and processes certificate applications on a rolling basis and the length of the certificate authorization is generally one or two years. An applicant seeking renewal of its certificate (renewing applicant) is required to provide certain data in its application. For example, renewing applicants are required to identify the total number of workers who were employed at the establishment/work site and paid a subminimum wage rate at any time during the most recently completed fiscal quarter.

The information collected by WHD on the certificate application form is thus a snapshot of the applicant employer's workforce that is paid a subminimum wage during the most recently completed fiscal quarter. The data provided with this report, as well as the list published on WHD's website, reflects active certificates as of the date the list was revised. The certificate application data contained in the report is self-reported by employers.

Annual Report to Authorizing and Appropriations Committees on the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division Section 14(c) Program

WHD maintains and regularly updates its list of certificate holders, which can be found on the WHD website at: <https://www.dol.gov/whd/workerswithdisabilities/certificates.htm>. This list can be searched by employer name or state and may be downloaded for further analysis.