



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of
Health and Social Services**

Governor's Council on Disabilities
& Special Education

3601 C Street, Suite 740
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Main: 907.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

July 5, 2016

David Berthiaume, U.S. Department of Labor
Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive and Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities
200 Constitution Avenue, Suite S - 1303, Washington, DC 20210

RE: Comment to Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive and Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities

Dear Mr. Berthiaume and Advisory Committee Members,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, GCDSE works with Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

The Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education would like to provide comment to the advisory committee to consider the recommendation of infusing federal money into the employment service system nationwide with something akin to the previous Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding in order to see the most effective and efficient implementation of many different federal rules and laws. With the confluence of so many nationally significant items related to competitive and integrated employment, including: the Work Force Innovation and Opportunity Act, Employment First, the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act, and the CMS integrated settings rule for Home and Community Based Services. At no other time has the employment service system been better aligned for such dramatic change, a true paradigm shift.

In Alaska, while we have made some profound strides in improving employment for individuals with disabilities through the federal Partnerships in Employment grant, this grant ends next year before many of these major rules, laws, and initiatives can become fully realized. This has significant implications with respect to our work which includes many moving parts such as work with Senior and Disabilities Services on supported employment services in integrated settings, the Department of Education on enhancing transition, ABLE Act and WIOA implementation, as well as training the system on the upcoming Alaska Disability Benefits 101 website to understand the important interplay of work and benefits. Investment in the system is vital now to truly weave these concepts through the entirety of the system.

The Council feels strongly that to make the most of all these aligned rules, laws, and initiatives, federal funding must be infused into the system to ensure all take hold and usher in the desired societal shifts in the way individuals with disabilities are viewed with respect to their employability in real jobs receiving real wages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Reinhart".

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education