

The following is my testimony from today, 5-21-14.

Thank you...

Hello... My name is Robin Renshaw. I'm a native of Las Vegas, Nevada.

In January 2009, according to disabilitystatistics.org, 39.2% of people with disabilities were employed, compared to 73.3% of people without disabilities. To increase these numbers, a year later in 2010, Nevada held an Employment Policy Summit which brought leaders from Nevada together in Elko, Reno, and Las Vegas to change the future for Nevadans with Developmental Disabilities who wanted to work. The intent of the summit was to increase employment for those with developmental disabilities. Sadly in 2012 the employment rate for people with disability didn't increase, but fell to 36.1% compared to 74.6% of people without disabilities.

In the years since, there has been a movement across the country towards employment first, which means: 1) There are measurable increases in employment of citizens with disabilities within the general workforce, earning minimum wage or higher with benefits, regardless of the severity of disability; 2) There are more opportunities for citizens with disabilities to pursue integrated employment; 3! Employment is the first and preferred option when exploring goals for all citizens with disabilities.

A year ago, there were 24 states that took formal policy actions towards Employment First, ranging from executive orders or directives by governors or passed legislation; today, it's increased to 31 states. Unfortunately, Nevada isn't one of them. However, given the fact that our governor is on the National Governors Association, a group that has put forth the initiative, A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities, which aims to increase employment among individuals with disabilities, it isn't unreasonable to think that Nevada would be among the 31 states that have committed.

Furthermore, the Department of Justice found a well-worn path established in Rhode Island where the students with disabilities went directly from high schools into segregated workshops without given opportunities for competitive employment. Addressing civil rights of about 3,250 Rhode Island residents, where, among other atrocities, employees were paid sub-minimum wage, making pennies an hour.

To me, this is a civil rights issue. By this, I mean, unless Nevada wants to be another Rhode Island, it should create programs and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities that are inclusive within the community. Nevadans with disabilities should have choice for integrated employment, an opportunity to come out from the shadows and benefit from a holistic life.

When I was born, my parents were told I would never walk or talk and would probably need to be institutionalized. Fortunately for me, they didn't listen. I want my fellow Nevadans with Developmental Disabilities, through these necessary changes by the state, to be afforded the same respect and dignity that my parents wanted for me.

Thank you...

EXHIBIT D - SENIORVETSPECIAL Document consists of 1 page. Entire exhibit provided. Meeting Date: 05-21-14
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