



June 4, 2012

The Honorable John Kline
Chair man
Education and the Workforce Committee
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Employment and Training Task Force, we are writing to express our deep concerns over the committee's plans to move HR 4297, The Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012 [WIA]. CCD is a coalition of over 100 national disability rights, advocacy and provider organizations that advocates on behalf of the 54 million people with disabilities and their families. The Employment and Training Task Force follows issues affecting employment opportunities for working age individuals with disabilities.

As currently drawn, this legislation does not do enough to address the chronically low labor force participation rate of people with disabilities and could actually deal a severe setback to efforts to promote economic independence for this population of Americans. We are particularly troubled that this bill would allow scarce vocational rehabilitation funds to be siphoned off for any purpose covered under Title I of WIA. The generic state workforce system does not have a very good record in serving people with significant disabilities. We see little in this legislation to hold states accountable for responding to the employment needs of hard to serve individuals such as those with disabilities.

Moreover, we object to the repeal of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act which authorizes the Supported Employment program for those with the most severe disabilities who often face the greatest challenges in obtaining and retaining employment. Title VI also includes authorization of the Projects with Industry program which actively involves business in rehabilitation programs providing training and placement services for good competitive jobs in the community. By rolling supported employment into another part of the Act that requires state matching funds, the committee will severely limit these services to persons in need because significant numbers of states are already unable to provide the state match to capture all federal funding available to them.

We believe that HR 4227, another version of WIA reauthorization, contains many positive provisions that continue and improve key programs that assist people with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. In particular, this legislation strengthens services to students with disabilities in need of vital pre-employment transition programs. In the interests of bipartisanship, we urge the members of the committee to find common ground in a WIA reauthorization that truly serves the needs of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Alicia Epstein, NISH
Co-chair

Susan Goodman, National Down Syndrome Congress
Co-chair

Charlie Harles,
International Association of Business, Industry & Rehabilitation
Co-chair

Susan Prokop,
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Co-chair



June 4, 2012

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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