

Public Comment to The Commission for People with Disabilities

April 19, 2018

My name is Cheryl Felak and I am a registered nurse specializing in the care of people with IDD and issues of health inequity for this population. This is my son Thomas. Thomas lives independently in supported living and has an integrated job with supported employment. I am Thomas guardian and it is my legal duty to speak on his behalf and for his benefit.

As Thomas' guardian I was denied the right to perform my legal duty by providing information to this commission with regards to the recent legislation on elimination of sub-minimum wage. In addition to that I have been harassed and received malicious responses to questions I have asked. This abusive treatment led to being censored and blocked from participating in the public Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities Facebook page. My questions have never been answered.

While I understand the law has been passed, there were many people with concerns and questions on the process who were denied opportunities to have their voices heard. There was far from unanimous agreement on the elimination of these certificates. In a meeting of the Housing, Health, Energy and Worker's Rights committee on March 29, 2018, Katrina Bull, from the Office of Labor Standards said that there was a robust response of 70 comments to their request on the rule-making and that there was a slight preference for elimination of certificates. This is in direct opposition to the information shared by this commission that there was unanimous agreement. This should have been an indication that there needed to be more planning and research done before moving ahead with a rapid elimination of special certificates.

It's not just about wages for the people who worked under these certificates. It's about community integration. Disregarding the information and opinions of those providing the needed supports to enable a person to participate in their community, violates that person's civil rights. People do not live in isolation and

there is much collaboration between various entities to help people integrate into their communities – be it with employment or other activities.

Without taking these supports into consideration when making legislative decisions, there are many harms done. Without a well planned and funded transition plan (which is well documented as necessary to success in national research) more people will be harmed than helped with legislation such as that which has recently passed.

The 2017 work plan from the employment committee contained goals. The elimination of special certificates was not listed and I'm curious if the other goals have been addressed.

1. Review of employment-related legislation for timely comment
2. Collaborate with county on sheltered work transition and make recommendations to the city as needed
3. Partner with existing disability job fairs
4. Explore partnership with DVR/SS to present on programs to support people on SSI/SSDI obtaining employment
5. Partner with the Seattle Public Schools to promote YLF to Seattle area students and help disabled students in Seattle find summer work (focus on

disabled youth of color)

Employment
Key Steps
Review of employment-related legislation for timely comment.
Collaborate with County on sheltered work transition and make recommendations to the city as needed.
Partner with existing disability job fairs.
Explore partnership with DVR/SS to present on programs to support people on SSI/SSDI obtaining employment.
Partner with the Seattle Public Schools to promote YLF to Seattle area students and help disabled students in Seattle find Summer work. (focus on disabled youth of color).

I have noted that in this year's work plan there is nothing related to evaluation, follow up or future planning for improving funding and supports for job development and job skill building for those with disabilities. In fact, there is not even an Employment Committee any longer.

- **Accountability to the Community.** The Commissions feel that it is crucial that they work with the Community on issues concerning them. They plan to reach out to the Community to get their input and expertise on issues that affect them. We need to be held accountable for our work and part of that is including the Community that we serve.

My concerns are the lack of collaboration and understanding when working with community members, particularly the community members who provide the support to enable people like my son to be fully integrated into the community. There needs to be accountability to the community – censorship and blocking participation is in direct violation of commission goals encouraging understanding

affecting the concerns among people with various disabilities as well as between people with disabilities and the larger Seattle community.

Thank you,

Cheryl Felak
Thomas Felak