

IMPORTANT, IF NOT NECESSARILY “GOOD” NEWS

We like to think there's always good news at SDMNY, and we're always delighted to share it with you. Even in all this heat, good things are happening— with many Decision-Makers on their way to their SDMAs, prospective Decision-Makers and their families attending information sessions and signing up for facilitation, a new Facilitator Training being planned for September, and much more. But sometimes there's also news from the larger universe that is important for our community and that we believe is worth sharing. This week it comes from our friends at ASAN (Autistic Self Advocacy Network) and concerns a significant piece of pending litigation that is critical to obtaining equal employment for people with disabilities.



Disabled people deserve to work at the same places and for the same pay as nondisabled people. This isn't news — but in 2024, some of us are still being paid less than the minimum wage in segregated workplaces. This is called subminimum wage, and it most commonly happens in sheltered workshops. It is discrimination, and it is unacceptable. That's why we're advocating for Congress to include the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (TCIEA) in the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pension (HELP) Committee's workforce markup package.

The Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (S.533) is a bill that would create competitive integrated employment opportunities for disabled people. A package is when related bills get grouped together. In this case, the HELP Committee's markup package has many workforce-related bills. We want TCIEA to be one of them! It is more likely to pass as part of a package than it is on its own. We also want more Senators to cosponsor the bill. (Cosponsoring means that a Senator supports a bill. Bills with more cosponsors are thought of as more popular.)

So what can you do? Neither of our Senators in New York are members of the HELP Committee, but you can make your voice heard (and demonstrate the concern of people with disabilities, their families and advocates) by calling the leaders of that committee, Senators Bernie Sanders and Ranking Member Senator Bill Cassidy. Their contact information is:

Senator Sanders: (202) 224-5141
Senator Cassidy: (202) 224-5824

If you're not sure what to say, ASAN has provided this helpful script:

My name is [your full name], and I am from [your city]. I am a constituent of Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand. I'm calling to ask Senator [name] to add the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act, or TCIEA, to the Senate HELP Committee's workforce markup package.
TCIEA would help states and businesses provide good jobs for disabled people so that we can be active in the workforce and more financially independent. New Hampshire, Maryland, Vermont, Arkansas and Oregon all show an increase in employment rates for disabled people since they switched from subminimum wage to fairly-paid employment in the community.
Disabled people want to work, and TCIEA would help us meet that goal. I would like to ask the Senators to include TCIEA in the HELP Committee's workforce markup package, ensure its passage this congressional session, and cosponsor TCIEA if they have not already.

Supported decision-making is critical to the right of legal capacity and to self-determination and autonomy for people with I/DD, but so also is the ability to have a good job that can provide financial independence.

THANKS TO ASAN FOR ALERTING OUR COMMUNITY TO THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE, AND GIVING US A GUIDE TO MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD!