



Proponent Testimony on H.B. 586
House State and Local Government Committee

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 586. My name is Kevin Krencisz, and I am the Chief Financial and Administrative Officer at the Cleveland Sight Center.

The Cleveland Sight Center is a private, non-profit agency that serves over 8,000 Ohioans every year from infants to seniors that are blind or are visually impaired. We provide low vision screenings, orientation and mobility training, education and rehabilitative services, assistive technologies, counseling and recreation opportunities. We also operate a call center that is on the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) procurement list. Our call center currently employs 60 individuals that are blind or have low vision.

The CRP is a purchasing program established in the Ohio Revised Code and overseen by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). Under the program, nonprofit organizations that employ Ohioans with work-limiting disabilities apply to be certified suppliers for goods and services. At present, there are 78 qualified CRPs located throughout the State of Ohio who collectively employ 2,021 people with disabilities. CRPs produce a wide range of goods and services including office supplies, safety apparel, landscaping, mail fulfillment, document shredding, data entry and call center services.

Prior to the start of a competitive selection process, Ohio's state agencies and political subdivisions must review and purchase from the procurement list of products and services available from certified CRP suppliers. DAS works with suppliers to ensure that products and services are provided at a **competitive market rate**.

We have experienced a very concerning trend in recent years where agencies will attempt to bundle multiple RFPs for services into a larger RFP which results in going around the CRP requirements. For example, our agency should have the first opportunity to service any contract that includes call center services. However, we have lost out on the ability to work with multiple agencies in recent years because call center services have been bundled with other non-CRP services. We ask for your support of House Bill 586 to explicitly prohibit bundling as a practice.

The CRP simply provides organizations that create jobs for individuals with disabilities the first bite at the apple. If an agency feels that the price of a CRP good or service is not at the market rate, or that a good or service does not meet their desired specifications or quality, there is a process for DAS to work with the agency to resolve the price discrepancy or ultimately use a different vendor. Closing the bundling loophole will create more jobs for Ohioans with work-limiting disabilities, allowing this population that has the highest rates of unemployment to become taxpayers.



The CRP program has many benefits. Government agencies receive the high-quality goods and services they need. People with disabilities become employed. CRPs achieve their missions. Therefore, the final benefit is to society at large. When people with disabilities become employed, they collect less entitlement benefits and become taxpayers. In 2013, DAS did a cost benefit analysis and found that every worker with a disability who became employed saved the government over \$2,000 each year through increased taxes and decreased entitlement spending.

Cleveland Sight Center's mission is to empower individuals with visual impairments to achieve independence. This is accomplished by providing access to employment. I ask for your support of this legislation to strengthen the CRP, which will provide additional jobs and training opportunities for people with disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to support this bill.