

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus and Members of the House Finance Committee:

Good morning/afternoon, my name is Jeff Rinck and I am a Sheltered Workshop owner, it is an honor and a privilege to be here today. I am here today to give insight on what takes place inside our workshop and the need to have such places like these for the employment needs of people that have Developmental Disabilities. We are honored to work with these adults and their voices need to be heard!

I want to tell you about a worker in our workshop named Pat. Pat is a middle aged man that does not speak, but has a great mind that can put together many complex things like puzzles. Pat is so good at puzzles and complex things, that we made a hinge for Werner Ladder and there was a 12 step process to constructing the ladder hinge. Pat was our quality control at the end of the assembly line. He would test the hinge and know if it worked correctly or if it needed to be fixed before being sent out to our customer. With a deficient part, he could deconstruct the 12 step process in his lap and have the piece properly constructed and ready to be sent to our customer in no time at all. He is amazing, along with all of the other workers that work at the workshop!

Now there is another side of Pat that I want you to know about. Pat often becomes agitated if his routine is thrown off even just slightly. You see Pat has to wear a hockey helmet for this reason. If he gets off of his routine he will start banging his head on any wall or table he can find out of frustration. He will do this even to the detriment of his own health. Also when Pat is frustrated, he will attempt to hit others, whether it is a staff member or another resident. Another thing about Pat is that he does not always want to work and needs to take extra- long breaks, but I guess we would all like long breaks. So we adapt his work and allow for this so that he does not act out in his frustration. In a community based work setting, Pat would probably would not be able to have these long breaks, especially in a job that is paying him a competitive wage, having demands on his work quotas. That is why a Sheltered Workshop is the perfect setting for Pat.

This is just one of the many examples of why it is so important to have Sheltered Workshops and to properly fund them. Pat is not the exception, but rather the rule in our workshop and if we had the time I could tell you many more stories like Pat's. In March, the HHS Subcommittee got to hear from some of the workers from our workshop and saw that they are fantastic human beings.

I am proud to tell you that we have a great staff that has been able to work with our workers like Pat and they are able to see the signs of his agitation and are usually able to calm him down before an eruption occurs. Not only are they able to help Pat, but they are able to help out the other workers in their own individual ways, like adapting jobs, providing for safety measures, and patiently training and re-training. This individualized care for their needs is exactly why Sheltered Workshops are so essential to these worker's needs.

The staff also do the dirty work that it takes to love somebody with special needs, and anyone that has a loved one, or has worked with an individual with special needs knows there are tasks that can be difficult at times. But we love our workers and our staff is happy to serve our workers in the workshops with the love, dignity, and respect they deserve. Some of these difficult tasks include, but are not limited to: Cleaning Feces off of the bathroom walls, helping clean somebody up after they have had their third accident of the day, being punched, kicked or spit on for no apparent reason, trying to calm somebody down that is agitated and can hurt others, trying to unclog a toilet that has had a shirt flushed down it, or cleaning up parts of a job thrown across the floor. I could go on and on, and the reason they do it is because they love the workers of our workshop. Trust me when I tell you that Sheltered Workshop settings are necessary and a good place, where love and respect are fostered.

If the DODD had their way, which they have stated is their intent, Workshops would lose some if not all of their funding, and the Employment First Initiative would be the only option for individuals with I/DD. Employment First states that residents can be employed as little as 1 hour a week, or attend a yoga class in the community. However, if you've ever visited a Sheltered Workshop, you would clearly see the workers are proud of their jobs, enjoy being around their friends, and they love to earn their paycheck. It is my argument today that funding and resources for Workshops and ICF's should be not decreased. Any changes to the funding structure could have huge ramifications and many unintended negative consequences. **IF THE SYSTEM IS NOT BROKEN PLEASE DO NOT TRY AND FIX IT!**

I understand this is a federal issue as well, so we need your help! We owe it to our residents who love their jobs. So I implore you to ask the hard questions of our leaders and not sit idly by thinking that they have the best interest of these great people like Pat at hand! Just because they are different and maybe don't speak as loud or don't speak at all, they deserve to be heard! People like Pat deserve a safe place to live and work where they find dignity, love, and acceptance while getting a chance to earn a paycheck. They should not be forced to move out of a safe setting where they have community, friendships, and real jobs, because a government agency has decided that it is "best" for them. Let's leave the choice up to the families and these individuals themselves and not change the payment structure or close these Workshops! Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions.