



COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
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June 6, 2012

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Congressman John Kline, Chairman
U.S. Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kline:

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My name is Steve Wooderson and I am the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). The CSAVR is composed of the chief administrators of the public vocational rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with physical and mental disabilities in the States, District of Columbia, and the Territories. These agencies constitute the state partners in the State-Federal program of rehabilitation services provided under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

As I am sure you are aware, on April 16, 2012, the CSAVR submitted a letter of opposition for the record to many of the major provisions of HR 4297. We did this because of our strong belief that such provisions would be detrimental to the access, delivery and employment outcomes of Vocational Rehabilitation's consumers, specifically those with the most significant disabilities.

To name a few, we are extremely concerned with Section 127 (2) that allows Governors Waiver Authority to eliminate VR or any other program under the Rehabilitation Act. We are also very concerned with the provision that only allows flat funding for the VR Program for 6 years; and while the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for VR is not eliminated, it is never added to the base funding. If this provision remains, the VR Program would not be able to keep up with the cost of inflation and the number of individuals the program would be able to serve would decrease significantly over time. These are but two of a significant number of provisions in HR 4297, to which the CSAVR has strong opposition.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities, served by the public VR Program, have the highest unemployment rate of any group of individuals. Without the targeted financial resources of the public VR Program and qualified rehabilitation personnel to provide the specialized services and supports these individuals need to obtain quality employment, the unemployment rate for this group will continue to climb. They will become more dependent on other benefits such as Medicare, Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, food stamps and public housing, to name a few. This will be far more costly to the states and the Federal Government than the resources spent by the VR Program to help individuals go to work and become taxpaying citizens who are contributing to the economy.

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Congressman Kline, we respectfully request that you consider a more moderate approach to the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, as outlined in Congressman Miller's Bill, HR 4297, so that individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities, have the opportunity to pursue and obtain quality competitive employment and live the American Dream.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen A. Wooderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "W".

Stephen A. Wooderson
Chief Executive Officer
CSAVR