



Easter Seals

Office of Public Affairs
1425 K Street, N.W.
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
202.347.3066 phone
202.347.7385 tty
202.737.7914 fax
www.easterseals.com

April 16, 2012

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman
Education and the Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller, Ranking Member
Education and the Workforce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Ranking Member Miller:

I am writing to express concern about the Workforce Investment Improvement Act, HR. 4297, and how the policies it creates could negatively affect older adults and jobseekers with disabilities.


Easter Seals is very troubled that HR 4297 calls for the repeal of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Easter Seals strongly supports the SCSEP program. The Government Accountability Office reported in a recent study (GAO-12-76) that older Americans have been hit hard by the recession. The GAO noted that “when older workers lose a job they are less likely to find other employment” and that older adults, 55 and older, “have insufficient time to rebuild their depleted retirement savings.” Easter Seals affiliates work regularly with adults over 55, including veterans, displaced homemakers and individuals with disabilities, who seek employment in their communities. Easter Seals employment specialists help low-income older adults gain new skills, build work history and find permanent employment through the SCSEP program. Now is not the time to eliminate the SCSEP program. Easter Seals also is concerned that the bill reduces the stature of the one federal agency with primary responsibility of assisting people with disabilities be successful at work. Easter Seals believes Americans with disabilities who face unemployment rates of more than 100 percent larger than their non-disabled peers need a strong advocate within the Administration, with the necessary authority and responsibilities to be effective.

However, we do support certain elements of HR 4297. Easter Seals is pleased that the bill maintains a dedicated job training program (vocational rehabilitation) for jobseekers with disabilities. In addition, we support the bill’s focus on transitioning youth with disabilities, including the provisions to encourage better coordination between school and work.

Easter Seals is a leading provider of job training and employment services. Last year, Easter Seals assisted more than 86,000 individuals through employment planning, skills training, job search and development, placement and ongoing employment supports. Easter Seals has leveraged its expertise and experience

serving individuals with disabilities to help other hard-to-serve populations. For example, several Easter Seals affiliates have expanded their employment services beyond jobseekers with disabilities to assist ex-offenders, high school dropouts, older adults and the long-term unemployment. Easter Seals agrees that the current workforce system should be updated and strengthened. We urge Congress to carefully consider proposed changes to ensure jobseekers who benefit most from our nation's job training system continue to have access to these timely services and supports. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Beh Neas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katy Beh Neas
Senior Vice President, Government Relations