

The Honorable John Kline, Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2187 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable George Miller, Senior Democratic Member
U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Senior Democratic Member Miller:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the inclusion of section 127 in H.R. 4297, the Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012. This section could completely end Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs in States exercising the authority in this section. This section would jeopardize the ability of individuals with disabilities to gain further education and skills and, most importantly, employment. This authority could seriously exacerbate what are already high levels of unemployment among individuals with disabilities.

Section 127 of H.R. 4297 would permit governors to consolidate funds, under a unified plan, that are presently received under several different federal funding streams, and treat such funds as if they were appropriated for programs and services provided through the Workforce Investment Act's one-stop centers. In such States, the current VR requirements to provide comprehensive services through individualized plans for employment would be eliminated. Unlike current law, States would no longer be required to place a priority on serving individuals with the most significant disabilities. Overall, the State VR systems and the services they provide, which millions of individuals with disabilities continue to rely on to gain or regain employment, could be lost.

As you move forward on this legislation, we urge you to reconsider the consolidation authority proposed by section 127 of H.R. 4297. While this section's provisions encouraging unified planning are valuable, its authority to consolidate programs would only lead to adults with the most significant disabilities losing the services that enable them to become productive and contributing members of the workforce.

Thank you for your attention to this letter.

Sincerely,



Paula Goldberg
Executive Director, PACER Center