

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and House Minority Leader McCarthy,

We write to request your consideration of protecting workers with disabilities participating in Section 14(c) subminimum wage programs in any upcoming legislation.

Since the announcement of President Biden's plan to increase minimum wage to \$15 and eliminate separate subminimum wages for workers with disabilities, we have had hundreds of constituents reach out with their concerns for their loved ones currently benefiting from 14(c) programs in Missouri. While we should not assume that all parents are fully speaking on the behalf of their child, they are the closest advocate for these individuals with disabilities. If we are to work to better these individual's lives by federal action, we should first give them a voice and opportunity to express how this effort should be carried out.

It is important to note that, other than relief during the pandemic, Missouri's 14(c) certificate programs do not utilize any federal funding, and many of the participating employers and workshops are self-sufficient businesses that generate a large portion of their income through customer relationships, goods, and services. These businesses are also home and family to many Missourians with disabilities that would not otherwise have the opportunity to earn any wages in the competitive market. For example, Project CU in the Saint Louis area has been partnering with parents and children with developmental disabilities since 1958. This successful business employs individuals who have been determined incapable of competitive work; however, if after a period of time, an employee is determined to transition to competitive work, they are referred to a local agency that will provide services to help them achieve this goal. Without the existence of the 14(c) program, Project CU would not be able to continue to support these hardworking individuals who just want a chance to earn a paycheck for themselves, build relationships with others and gain a sense of independence and community.

While we do not believe these individuals should be forced into subminimum wage employment, eliminating the option altogether will only hurt those who do not wish to enter into competitive employment or those who are not able. With only 35% of disabled individuals employed in the competitive market, it is our duty to look for ways to expand employment opportunities, not diminish them. It is our hope that you will reconsider this blanket elimination of all subminimum wage programs. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or would like additional information.

We sincerely appreciate your attention to this important matter and stand ready to work with you to protect workers with disabilities in any upcoming coronavirus-relief package. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



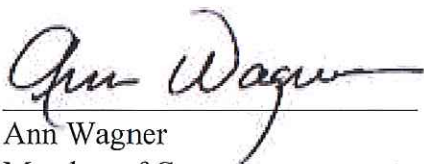
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



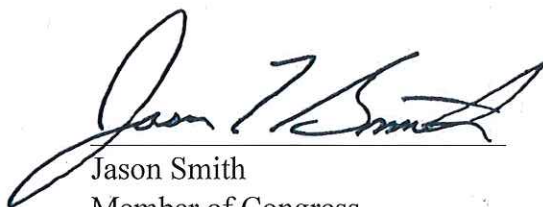
Billy Long
Member of Congress



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Sam Graves
Member of Congress