



MARRIOTT FOUNDATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

March 18, 2015

Mr. David Berthiaume  
Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment  
for Individuals with Disabilities  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Suite S-1303, 200 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Mr. Berthiaume,

The Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (the Committee) has requested comments on implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and strategies to increase opportunities for individuals with intellectual, developmental or other significant disabilities in competitive, integrated employment. On behalf of the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities (MFPD) and its Bridges from School to Work (Bridges) program, I offer the enclosed documentation to the Committee.

As discussed in Attachment I, Bridges was developed by MFPD in 1989 and has a long history of engaging employers, schools, community resources, youth with disabilities and their families to create and support mutually beneficial, competitive employment relationships. Each year, Bridges serves about a thousand young people—most transitioning out of high school special education—helping them prepare for and succeed in the competitive workplace. Matched with an employer in need of qualified entry-level employees, the young person can learn and grow on the job while helping businesses meet their workforce needs. Given this focus, Bridges is keenly interested in WIOA's implementation.

Although Bridges may have additional comments in the future, the purpose of this letter is to draw the Committee's attention to a recent article published in the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation entitled "Long term earnings and disability program participation outcomes of the Bridges transition program." While clearly demonstrating that there's more work to be done, it offers evidence of the benefits of a program like Bridges. Key conclusions include:

1. Disabled individuals can maintain competitive employment for the long term when introduced to it at an early age: After entering the Bridges program, typically in their late teens, "by age 30 about 73 percent [of Bridges participants] have earnings."

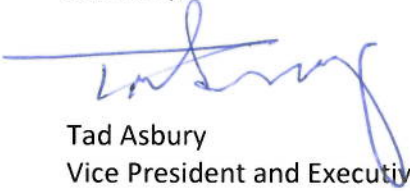
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2. Looking more specifically at Bridges participants who were receiving SSI at age 17, at age 30 they had earnings at a rate almost 50% higher than a comparison group of youth in the same geography who were receiving SSI at 17 but did not participate in Bridges: " 50 percent of the Bridges group have earnings at age 30 while only 34 percent of the comparison group do."
3. Competitive job programs for individuals with disabilities can result in significant cost savings to Social Security: "the total (Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) ) benefits received by Bridges participants who were on SSI at age 17, cumulative from age 18 to age 30, were on average \$12,311 (17 percent) less than the comparison group of non-Bridges SSI recipients."

In sum, I hope that the Committee will find this information helpful in deciding how to target implementation of WIOA. Bridges is committed to being an active participant in the process and would be glad to provide any additional information or assistance that might be helpful.

Sincerely,



Tad Asbury  
Vice President and Executive Director

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