

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 9, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Executive Order Expanding Apprenticeships in America

Dear President Trump:

In your Executive Order signed June 15, 2017, you wrote apprenticeships provide “relevant workplace experiences and opportunities to develop skills that employers value.”¹ We believe that enhanced support for apprenticeship programs, coupled with continued accountability and oversight over such programs, can put more Americans on a path towards upward mobility. We write today to begin a dialog aimed at promoting access to high quality apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities.


By way of background, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its annual report on June 21, 2017. The report found fewer than one in five people with disabilities were employed. In 2016, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities was 10.5%, a little more than twice that of people with no disability.² Many people with disabilities want jobs. In fact, many of them grew up with the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) which began the preparation to live as productively and independently as possible. The BLS data clearly shows the disconnect between the goal of employment for people with disabilities and reality.

Your Executive Order calls for the establishment of a Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion to “identify and provide a report on strategies and proposals to promote apprenticeships.”¹ We are writing to ask that the Task Force consider as part of its deliberations transition from school-to-work special education programs as well as workforce training and development programs that provide services and supports to youth and adults with disabilities. There is ample evidence that people with disabilities can and do benefit from work-based learning experiences. The second National Longitudinal Transition Study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education identified high school work-based learning experiences as a strong predictor of employment after exiting school.³

Moving forward, we are hopeful that this initiative improves access to high quality apprenticeship programs for the future workforce of our nation, including those with disabilities.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
U.S. Senator


Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator

CC: Secretary Acosta, U.S. Dept. of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/15/presidential-executive-order-expanding-apprenticeships-america>

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/disabl.nr0.htm>