

Good Morning. My name is David Abramowitz from Eugene Oregon. I am in my second term as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council. In the time I have before you today, I want to follow up on Vocational Rehabilitation's Director Trina Lee's presentation to you yesterday.

Vocational Rehabilitation by comparison is a small program within DHS, but it has a big impact on the lives of the people in our state who experience a disability. **Initially, VR came to be in 1920 as an expansion of the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act of 1918, which was only for veterans who had physical disabilities. Here we are almost 100 years later, but I do not think I can down this memory lane with the time I have.**

**I was fortunate to work in this field initially for 6 years in Lane County's Employment and Training Program. In providing a special needs employment program for youth and adults with disabilities. I then spent the next 26 years as a special education teacher in the Eugene School District heading up a transition program for students ages 14 to 21 with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In both these jobs I worked collaboratively with vocational rehabilitation.**

I have seen the evolution of VR in Oregon over these past 40 years. 40 years in which so much has changed in the world of opportunity and services for people with disabilities. Additionally, the expectations on VR have also risen significantly.

Here is what I want to add to Trina Lee's presentation:

- **the State Rehabilitation Council is an active partner with VR, we work together on policy and practice, new demands on VR like WIOA and the Lane Settlement. The expertise and viewpoints from Council members is encouraged and incorporated into VR decisions and actions. Under Director Lee's leadership we have participated in the organization behind the organization with the mutual goal of making certain that Oregonians receive the best services possible, and that the VRC has the structure and support to be successful in their work. The SRC will be involved in the upcoming Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.**

In the upcoming funding cycle, VR has two significant challenges regarding youth with disabilities, and transition age youth and adults with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities.

WIOA has an emphasis on youth, and VR over this past year has positioned itself to meet these expectations. Expectations that do not come with additional funding. Yet VR has reorganized to address these expectations, and has been working closely with ODE and school districts in implementing the Pre Employment Transition Services requirement of WIOA. Oregon has been fortunate by the efforts of VR in setting up the YTP program in 1990, which started with 7 high schools. Today, this program impacts over 120 high schools, and has added over 100 Youth Transition Specialists who enhance school and VR services in helping students with disabilities transition successfully into post secondary education and/or employment. Thousands of students have benefitted from this program, which has generated millions of dollars through Federal Match to the school

and VRs ability to provide transition services over these past 27 years. It is a strong foundation from which to address WIOA's expectations, but still a significant added cost of time and effort of existing staff.

The Lane vs Brown settlement, has increased the number of clients served who have I/DD. These clients tend to have more significant needs, and require strong collaboration between VR, DD, Schools, and vocational providers. **VR has funded with ODE this past year 8 or 9 Transition Network Facilitators around the State to assist in not only helping local programs successfully transition students with I/DD, but also in assisting where schools where YTP isn't in place. Additionally, VR specialized additional VRC caseloads around supported employment.** This growing demand of clients with I/DD due to the Brown settlement is also a significant cost for VR moving forward.

I know you have some very difficult work ahead as you weigh the best use of the limited funds available. The work that DD and the schools do as a result of Lane vs Brown, is dependent on the work that VR can do, and conversely the work that VR does is dependent on the work that DD and the Schools do. Cutting back the services of any of these key players, significantly impacts the efforts of any one agency.

Same can be said with the transition expectations of WIOA. Both the schools and VR need to step up together, to enhance and compliment the services that each provide.

Students with disabilities transitioning into employment and adulthood, need the momentum that all these programs can provide by working together. Successful transition occurs when the future can be part of the present, in other words DD and VR overlapping with the schools. To not do so, means our young adults entering a routine of social isolation and inactivity with hopes and dreams unrealized. Maintaining funding is the key to opportunity and the continuity of the staff in the lives of people who need support to realize their basic human rights.

Thank you for your time and consideration.