

House Committee on Education and Workforce

Hearing on “Work, Dignity, and Choice in Disability Employment

February 13, 2026

Testimony of Barbara LeDuc – Written Testimony

Across Wisconsin and the nation, too many individuals with IDD struggle to find *and keep* jobs in Community Integrated Employment (CIE). Many work only a few hours per week, lose positions because they cannot meet productivity expectations, or simply cannot find employers willing to hire them—particularly in rural communities. As a result, young adults and older individuals often end up at home with no structure, no purpose, and no opportunity to contribute.

Under current rules, individuals must often wait until age 26 before they can work in a **Section 14(c) Work Center**. This delay forces them into repeated failure while viable, appropriate employment opportunities already exist.

Why 14(c) Centers Matter

For individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 14(c) is not a “lesser option”—

It is the option that allows them to work every day, all day, with pride, safety, and dignity.

14(c) Work Centers:

- Provide **consistent, full-day employment** that mirrors the work schedules of their families and peers.
- Allow individuals to work at a **pace suited to their disability**, without penalty.
- Earn a **paycheck for work performed** to supplement Social Security Income.
- Offer **meaningful social interaction, routine, and stability** that enhance mental and physical health.
- Serve as **true community employers**, partnering with local businesses who supply real jobs and meaningful work.
- **Paid fairly** based on skill level set forth from Department of Labor Guidelines.

For Individuals with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Green Valley Enterprises, a division of Opportunities, Inc., is not sheltered, it is **community-connected, community-supported, and community-valued**.

The Reality If 14(c) Ends

If 14(c) is eliminated:

- Many individuals will have **no job at all**, not even a few hours a week.
- Families will face impossible gaps in care, supervision, and structure.
- Adults with IDD may regress physically, socially, and emotionally—as we saw clearly during the pandemic.
- Rural communities will lose one of the only viable employment options for their most vulnerable residents. Many rural communities do not have the luxury of large corporations, government set aside work, or transportation.
- Many individuals will be disconnected from friendships that are vital to their well-being.

This is not speculation—it is already happening in states that lost their 14(c) certificates. While a few success stories are highlighted, the vast majority of former 14(c) workers are now unemployed, sitting at home, or placed in adult day programs with minimal engagement.

Choice Matters

Families, individuals with IDD and CHOICE Advocates are not asking for favors—**We are asking for the right to choose the employment model that best supports their abilities, their happiness, and their stability.**

Higher-functioning individuals can and should pursue CIE (Community Integrated Employment), however, penalizing our most vulnerable because others do not agree with their CHOICE is not the answer.

But for those who cannot—or who have tried and failed—**14(c) is not optional. It is essential.**

A Call to Action

We ask legislators to:

1. **Protect and continue Section 14(c)** for those who need it.
2. **Ensure individuals and families have a real voice** before policy decisions are made.
3. **Recognize 14(c) Work Centers as community jobs** that provide dignity, purpose, and economic participation.

4. **Explore increased funding** to strengthen and modernize these centers, not eliminate them.
5. **Visit your local 14(c) centers**—see firsthand the pride, joy, and success they create every single day.
6. **Please watch the stakeholder videos and their direct message on CHOICE.**

Andy's Self-Advocate Message <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbEM-jJC1jw>

This is MY Life <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acDxkLrXoyQ>

A Team Advocacy Voice! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grwuAi5Z8jY>

Thousands of individuals count on having a full array of services. They go to work proudly, on time, every day. They earn paychecks, celebrate accomplishments, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Eliminating 14(c) removes *their* opportunity to belong, participate, and succeed.

We urge you to stand with individuals with IDD, the families who support them, and the organizations that make their employment possible.

Protect their choice. Protect their voice. Protect 14(c).