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Kathy Cooper

From: Michael Carney <michaelcarney11@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2017 1:38 PM
To: IRRC
Subject: Fwd: Please Reject! ODP Communication Memo 095-16 Appendices A-H.

2017 JAN 17 PM 3:25

As the older brother of a young man with special needs, I sincerely ask that you consider repealing or revising ODP Communication Memo 095-16 Appendices A-H. The impacts on our family would be catastrophic-emotionally, financially, socially and ethically. This new legislation will force Associated Productions Services (APS) in Ivyland to close and leave my brother unemployed. Please protect this vulnerable population.

Here is the story of my brother John Patrick Carney.

Every weekday at 5:30am, the alarm goes off and a new day starts for JP. He hops out of bed eager to get to work. Teeth get brushed, face is shaved and his favorite Penn State gear is on. With a big grin, he is on his way to Associated Productions Services (APS), Inc. in Ivyland, PA. He's dropped off at the front door where he is buzzed into the building. Straight to his locker to hang his coat and store his lunch. Around noon his co-workers take lunch as he grabs his normal seat next to his best friend Colin. They talk about the Sixers, Penn State football and sometimes politics. Around 3:00pm his day ends and he's on his way back home. He spends time at The Carney Group before Dad takes him home to pack his lunch and get ready for tomorrow's routine. This is a typical day in the life of JP. Yet, JP is anything but a typical kid. He was born with Down Syndrome, endured a grueling and life-threatening open heart surgery at 11 months old and is the youngest of 7 Carney kids. Typical? No. Inspirational? Yes. His world revolves around routine, and now that routine is at risk because of uninformed, sweeping governmental legislation that threatens to close APS and devastate JP.

There is a current proposal by the US Department of Health and Human Services and Office of Developmental Programs that will cease all funding to every facility-based work program for persons with special needs in PA. This legislation takes away the choice of every family who has a special needs adult from allowing them to be part of a facility-based work program. These programs, also known as sheltered workshops like APS in PA that serve people with more severe disabilities, will be shuttered. These specialized settings offer services and social opportunities that are not available elsewhere. What's the alternative? Their only option would be to work in a competitive environment or be unemployed.

That raises the following concerns facing special needs adults:

- Who will ensure they are safe in a competitive work environment?
- What is the impact on the families? Can parents afford to quit their jobs to stay home with their special needs adult if they don't qualify for competitive employment?
- Will there be statewide and company-wide training to learn how to communicate with someone with special needs? Ie- Sign Language? Eye Contact? Reading?
- Which companies will pay the same wages for a worker with special needs as they do other workers?
- How will they be transported to competitive work environments? Bus? Train? UBER?

- Will their federal funding, like Medicaid, also be cut because they are now paid more?

The value of the program at APS is that it affords JP, and others like him, a safe and secure environment to work in every day. He has lunch with his friends he knows from North Penn High School. He has a building that is safeguarded by locked doors and security. He has a skilled work coach and psychologist that is a resource to JP when he is having a tough day or needs direction. He has a van subsidized by the government with a trained driver that takes him to APS every day.

This new legislation to integrate all persons with special needs into competitive work environments is FAILING across the United States. The unemployment rate has skyrocketed for special needs adults in states where the funding has been cut to sheltered workshops. Instead of these special needs adults being more integrated into competitive environments, they are unemployed, un-socialized and unhappy.

The Carney Family CHOSE APS. Isn't it up to the Carney Family to choose the best place for JP, not the government? APS has worked with the Special Needs community for the past 40 years. Let's make it at least another 40.