

TURNING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WITH DISABILITIES INTO TAXPAYERS ACT
(Pennsylvania House of Representatives Labor and Industry Committee Hearing HB 205)

Good morning. My name is Patricia Lurwick and I am very proud to say I am Samantha's Mom.

Although she was born with a disability she continues to amaze my husband and me with her ABILITIES!

She has many dreams and goals. We want to see her to reach them.

Samantha is in her 14th year at Parkland High School in Lehigh County. She has two years left and then we face the proverbial cliff – that point in time when all services and programs stop. Like many parents we fear we will be scrambling trying to find something to fill her days when she is done with school.

There is a dire need to provide better job training for my daughter and her peers. We need to do a better job of helping them become qualified for and find part-time employment while they are still in school. Non-disabled high school students typically get their first jobs while in school. They work part-time nights, weekends and summers. The job skills they are able to obtain through those experiences are invaluable. Why shouldn't my daughter and her friends be afforded the same experience? I KNOW SHE HAS THE ABILITY TO BECOME A TAXPAYER. She may just need some additional training and most importantly she needs opportunities! Currently, obtaining gainful employment while still in high school is not even considered as a viable outcome of her IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Why shouldn't it be? Why couldn't it?

Currently the only job training Samantha gets is through a program called Work Based Learning. While this program has allowed her to experience many types of jobs, the skills taught are limited. She has become very versed at wiping down tables and chairs. I know she can and should be doing more. The program does not allow her to obtain true marketable job skills and further there is no potential for an employment outcome.

Waiting to have the involvement of OVR until these young adults are over 21 is not effective. There is a tremendous need for these young adults gain employment while still in the school system so that their transition from school to adult life is not like falling off a cliff. Research shows that paid employment during high school years is a major factor for young adults gaining employment post-graduation. Everyone wants to have a happy, full and productive life. Employment is key to having it. On behalf of my daughter and all of her friends please consider making this act a reality so that they can become happy, independent and taxpaying adults. Thank you for your time.

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