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**** ACTION ALERT****

Encourage Members of Congress to Cosponsor TEAM Legislation

Support Legislation aimed at Transitioning towards Excellence & Achievement in Mobility (TEAM)

TEAM-Employment Act (H.R. 509), TEAM-Education Act (H.R. 510), TEAM-Empowerment Act (H.R. 511)

CALL TO ACTION: OBJECTIVE

CPSD is calling on all partners and advocates to utilize this opportunity to urge your Members of Congress to cosponsor the TEAM legislation and also try to identify and cultivate Senate champions to introduce the TEAM legislation in the U.S. Senate.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Despite the public funding going into the provision of employment services for individuals with disabilities requiring significant supports, the participation rate of persons with disabilities in employment remains low. However, when state education, vocational rehabilitation, workforce development, Medicaid, and other public agencies work closely together early to support and promote the growth and development of youth with significant disabilities, individuals benefit from the synergistic coordination of supports and are able to achieve better outcomes. To ensure effective coordination among these entities, it is critical that systemic changes allow for flexible braiding of resources, coupled with a collective presumption that publicly-financed supports should focus on and prioritize the attainment of outcomes associated with post-secondary education, integrated employment, and economic advancement of individuals with significant disabilities.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEAM LEGISLATION

To address several of these systemic barriers and better promote the advancement of Americans with significant disabilities transitioning from youth to adulthood, a trio of bills called the Transitioning towards Excellence in Achievement and Mobility (TEAM) legislation was reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 5, 2013. Each of the three bills, the TEAM-Employment Act (H.R. 509), TEAM-Education Act (H.R. 510), and TEAM-Empowerment Act (H.R. 511), would strengthen accountability, clarify expectations, and align systems to ensure that public funds related to transition are effectively utilized to support one uniform goal -- ensuring that every youth with a significant disability has the opportunity, encouragement and support to become gainfully employed in an

[CPSD Action Alert on TEAM Act \(February 2013\)](#)



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integrated setting, pursue a post-secondary education, and contribute to and engage in meaningful ways in typical community settings as they transition into adulthood.

- The **TEAM-Employment Act (H.R. 509)** would amend the Rehabilitation Act to ensure a solid focus on improving transition outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities, and streamlines public funding by requiring the VR systems to actively engage with other state entities to promote cross-system collaboration and make it easier for individuals and families to navigate various public supports.
- The **TEAM-Education Act (H.R. 510)** would amend the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by requiring transition components to be included in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for all IDEA-eligible students at the age of 14, expands the definition of transition services to include customized employment strategies and self-determination activities, and clarifies that local school districts can use discretionary dollars to bring in transition expertise or contract out transition services to ensure youth with disabilities get the same kind of opportunities for work experience, mentoring, leadership development and career counseling as every other student.
- The **TEAM-Empowerment Act (H.R. 511)** would amend the Developmental Disabilities Assistance & Bill of Rights Act to establish Transition Planning and Service Divisions within the State Intellectual/Developmental Disability Authorities, which would be responsible for working with young adults with significant disabilities and their families to develop and implement Individual Transition Plans to advance best outcomes and self-determination once the individual leaves the school system.

ADVOCACY ACTION REQUESTED:

1. **The Request** –

- a) Call or email your Member of Congress and ask him or her to consider becoming a cosponsor of the TEAM Act of 2013.

2. **How to Contact your Member of Congress** –

- a) To reach your Member of Congress , call the US Capitol switchboard by dialing 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to the offices of your Congressman or Congresswoman. Once you reach the office, ask to speak to the legislative assistant who is handling education and employment issues



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related to youth with disabilities. Make sure you ask for their email address as well so you can also follow up with an email in the future.

ADVOCACY ACTION ALERT DISCUSSION GUIDE – SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

- *I am an (individual living with a significant disability/family member of an individual with a significant disability, or innovative provider of services for individuals with significant disabilities).*
- *I believe that citizens with the most significant disabilities are extremely capable of succeeding in post-secondary education and integrated employment if given the proper supports to ensure an effective transition from youth to adulthood.*
- *Integrated employment builds confidence among individuals with disabilities and ensures their meaningful engagement in our society as productive citizens.*
- *Unfortunately, current public policy and systems tend to be biased in having low expectations of youth with significant disabilities, and often push these young adults into more segregated environments like day habilitation or sheltered workshops because of these low expectations.*
- *I'm calling because I firmly believe that with a little creativity, flexibility, and an expectation among all parties that an individual with disabilities can and will succeed in post-secondary education and integrated employment, great things are possible.*
- *We must have the courage to make the reforms necessary to truly improve outcomes for the next generation of youth living with significant disabilities.*
- ***Please consider introducing the TEAM legislation package, which includes the TEAM-Employment Act (H.R.509), TEAM-Education Act (H.R. 510), and TEAM-Empowerment Act (H.R. 511). This body of legislation takes a holistic approach at tackling the comprehensive systems reform and would result in significant improvements in outcomes for youth with significant disabilities.***