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May 30, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
2439 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Harkin, Senator Alexander, Congressman Kline, and Congressman Miller:

The National Federation of the Blind, the oldest and largest organization of blind people in the United States, supports the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Title IV of this legislation, the Rehabilitation Act, is the product of serious and substantive discussions and negotiations with the blind and other Americans with disabilities. It is an important first step toward eliminating wage discrimination against people with disabilities, and it focuses the rehabilitation system on providing quality rehabilitation services that empower people with all disabilities to obtain competitive integrated employment.

In particular, we believe that the compromise language in Section 511, while not perfect, will help reduce the number of disabled youth being tracked into sheltered subminimum wage employment. We are also pleased that the Rehabilitation Services Administration will remain within the Department of Education and that programs for the older blind will also continue to be handled by this department. The critical importance of the Rehabilitation Services Administration is properly maintained because its director will continue to be appointed by the president and confirmed by the United States Senate.

The National Federation of the Blind is disappointed in the shifting of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research to the Department of Health and Human Services. We also disagree with the reduction in membership of the National Council on Disability, a significant downgrade of this important voice on disability policy. We are also disappointed with the lowering of standards for the qualifications of rehabilitation counselors.

As a whole, however, the National Federation of the Blind supports this legislation and believes that it represents a significant improvement in policies designed to create and enhance employment opportunities for American workers with disabilities. We thank each

Supporting WIOA
May 30, 2014
Page two

of you for your hard work in crafting this important bill and look forward to working with you to see it become law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Paré Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John G. Paré Jr.
Executive Director for Advocacy and Policy
National Federation of the Blind