



JB Pritzker, Governor

Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary

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DATE: 5/1/2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable John F. Curran, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Don Harmon, Senate President
The Honorable Tony McCombie, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the House

FROM: Dulce Quintero *Dulce Quintero*
Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services *by M. S. Shaw*

SUBJECT: **Economic and Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Annual Report (May 1, 2024- April 30, 2025)**

The Illinois Department of Human Services respectfully submits the **Economic and Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Task Force Annual Report** on behalf of the **Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation** in order to fulfill the requirements set forth in **Public Act 96-368**.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact **Tereta Love-Rutherford, DRS Policy Advisor** at tereta.love-rutherford@illinois.gov, 217-606-9012.

cc: The Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor
John W. Hollman, Clerk of the House
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the Illinois Senate
Legislative Research Unit
State Government Report Center



STATE OF ILLINOIS

Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) Taskforce Annual Report 2025

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

MAY 1, 2025

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I. EEOPD TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP

State Government Representatives:

Anna D’Ascenzo, Illinois Department of Employment Security
Chris Bond, Central Management Services
Casey Burke, IDHS-Division of Developmental Disabilities
Melissa Cory, Juvenile Justice
Ryan Croke, Illinois Governor’s Office*
Mariel Hamer-Sinclair, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities
Lori Harrison, IDHS, Division Early Childhood
Ahlam Jbara, IDHS-Division of Family and Community Services
Lisa Jones, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
LaMetric Lane, Illinois State Board of Education
Kimberly Mercer-Schleider, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities
Darius McKinney, IDHS-Division of Mental Health
Dr. Nkechi Onwuameze, Illinois State Board of Higher Education
Rahnee Patrick, IDHS-Division of Rehabilitation Services
Ganaphathi Ramaswamy, Department of Labor (non-voting, advisory capacity)
Rafael Rivera, IDHS-Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery
Alex Weidenhamer, Illinois Community College Board

Public Appointed Members:

Katie Blank, Access Living
Brion Brooks, Village of Progress (14(c) Certificate)
Kathy Carmody, Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities
Benjamin Evangelista Lumicao, Allstate*
Josh Evans, Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
Britney Godwin, Illinois Assistive Technology Program
Marilyn Green, The National Federation of the Blind of Illinois
Shea Haury, Comwell
Cheryl Jansen, Equip for Equality
Mohammed Khan, Special Olympics Illinois
Phil Milsk, Attorney and Public Policy Advocate
Benro Ogunyipe, Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission
Michael Roush, National Disability Institute
Hugo Saltijeral, Valley Sheltered Workshop (14(c) Certificate)
Patty Walters, Developmental Services Center

*Co-chairs

There are currently five (5) vacant seats for appointment for the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, higher education, veterans with disabilities, and organized labor.

II. BACKGROUND

The Employment and Economic Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities (EEOPD) Taskforce was established in 2009 via Legislation ([PA 96-368](#)). The EEOPD Taskforce purpose is to

“...analyze programs and policies of the state to determine what changes, modifications, and innovations may be necessary to remove barriers to competitive employment and economic opportunity for persons with disabilities. The Taskforce makes recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor including regulatory changes to advance employment and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities in Illinois.”

The State of Illinois legislature passed legislation in 2013 declaring Illinois an [Employment First](#) State via the Employment First Act ([20 ILCS 40](#)) with the objective to ensure people with disabilities are given the option to engage in integrated, competitive employment at or above minimum wage. Executive order [14-08](#), signed in 2014, set forth a process for Illinois to achieve this goal.

The Taskforce created four workgroups to support the Employment First initiative: Workforce Development, Provider, Employer, and Transition. In 2018, the Taskforce created a [Recommendations Report](#), detailing implementation strategies for the state of Illinois in each of the workgroup focus areas, which continues to guide the work and priorities of the Taskforce today. In response to the 2018 recommendations, the Taskforce added a Legislative Workgroup and in 2024 a Dignity in Pay Workgroup.

The Taskforce encompasses seventeen designated State Agencies: Governor’s Office, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Community Colleges Online (ILCCO), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Department of Human Services, Divisions of: Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Developmental Disabilities (DDD), Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR), Early Childhood, Family and Community Services (FCS), and Mental Health (DMH), Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD), Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), Central Management Services (CMS), Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS), and Veterans Affairs. A non-voting advisory position was added through PA 103-1060 for Labor. In addition, there are fifteen public members appointed by the Governor’s Office (at least 5 who are disabled). The diverse stakeholder group is comprised of representatives from the following sectors:

- Statewide organizations who advocate for persons with physical, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities
- Entities with expertise in assistive technology devices and services for persons with disabilities
- Entities who provide employment and training services to persons with disabilities
- Advocates for veterans with disabilities
- Centers for independent living & disability services providers
- Organized labor
- Higher education
- Private sector business community
- Entities who provide employment and training services to persons with disabilities

III. WORKGROUP SUMMARIES

A. Workforce Development Workgroup:

The Workforce Development Workgroup was formed to identify key policies, practices, and strategies to align services and to improve opportunities for competitive and integrated employment. The Workforce Development Workgroup’s strategic focus areas include:

- 1) The alignment of the State’s mandated requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with Employment First principles. Alignment will result in opportunities for competitive and integrated employment for youth and adults with disabilities to include people currently receiving sub-minimum wage.
- 2) Transformation of the State into a model employer for people with disabilities. The State becoming a model employer will ensure people with significant disabilities can receive reasonable accommodations, including exemptions from the current testing and interview process for state employees.
- 3) Modification of the State’s Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and the State-Use Program to be consistent with Employment First. Modifications will require statutory and regulatory changes.
- 4) Ensuring the State’s website structure and content on www.illinois.gov follows federal and state accessibility laws. Ensuring accessibility will require a centralized and coordinated audit of current content and policies and procedures for posting content moving forward.
- 5) The establishment of a Statewide training protocol on Employment First for new and existing employees. Additionally, using already existing materials and coordinating with ongoing training events will facilitate the process.

The Workforce Development Work Group identified the state agencies and departments who will play a central role in achieving objectives their strategic focus areas. Notably, Central Management Services (CMS) will play a key role given its responsibility for hiring policies, website management, and training. Additionally, CMS oversees the two major programs who must change to comply with Employment First – the BEP and the State Use Program. Other agencies who will play key roles will be the Illinois Department of Human Services-Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, especially with respect to their work on the implementation of WIOA, and the Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) regarding the accessibility of state websites and technology systems.

Chair:

Darius McKinney IDHS-Division of Mental Health

B. Provider Workgroup:

The Provider Workgroup was formed to identify key policies, practices and strategies that must be addressed and embraced for all citizens of Illinois to attain the goal of employment. The Provider Workgroup’s strategic focus areas include:

- 1) The alignment of State policies, practices, and funding mechanisms with the ideal all citizens are capable of competitive employment, and employment should be the first consideration for adults of working age.
- 2) The redesign of the State’s current service delivery system for existing services to be re-aligned toward supporting the goal of competitive and integrated employment.
- 3) Addressing Statewide systemic barriers currently impeding the pursuit of competitive integrated employment and crafted concrete steps for remedying these obstacles.
- 4) Assuring State agency resources are expended on daytime supports are focused on preparing people to pursue and achieve competitive employment and supporting people to become full and productive members of their communities.

The Provider Workgroup identified a multitude of state agencies and departments who will be centrally involved in achieving objectives their strategic focus areas. Divisions within the Department of Human Services, specifically the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Mental Health, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities are the most critical entities to pursuing and accomplishing the steps outlined in our recommendations, though other state departments are referenced as well. The Provider Workgroup also recognized that the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities plays a critical role in supporting the evolution toward a more employment-focused system.

Co-Chairs: Kathy Carmody, The Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities
(resigned from workgroup role in January 2025)
Casey Burke, IDHS – Division of Developmental Disabilities

C. Employer Workgroup:

The Employer Workgroup was created to provide recommendations that will sustain the increased engagement of public and private employers to achieve Employment First in Illinois. Strategic focus areas for the Employer’s Workgroup include:

- 1) The development of a State supported awareness campaign to educate employers, both private and public, regarding the benefits, incentives and value proposition of hiring, training, retaining and advancement of persons with disabilities.
- 2) The creation of a Statewide, State supported shared service portal for employers and vocational providers (including but not limited to community rehabilitation programs).
- 3) The implementation of a Statewide, State supported functional system to connect employers with vocational providers.
- 4) The development and execution of a Statewide, State supported meaningful and validated measurement process.

The Employer Workgroup identified multiple state agencies and departments who will play a central role in achieving objectives in their strategic focus areas. Particularly, the Governor’s Office, Central Management Services, Department of Employment Security, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Information Technology, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Department of Human Services. Additionally, all the agencies identified or required to be involved in the Employment First Act, and any agency who does not rely solely on general revenue funds.

Co-Chairs: Maria Doughty, The Chicago Network (resigned appointment effective January 2025)
Anna D’Ascenzo, Illinois Department of Employment Security

D. Transition Workgroup:

The Transition Workgroup was formed to identify policies and practices that will increase the competitive and integrated employment of youth. The Transition Workgroup's strategic areas of focus include:

- 1) Ensure the State enacts high quality transition planning and service coordination personnel at the local and regional levels and using Transition Planning Committees (TPC) effectively. Transition plans and services must be prepared for all students with disabilities in Illinois must provide consistent, high-quality, individualized services to prepare them for employment and other facets of adult life.
- 2) Improving the State's collection, analysis, and reporting of post-transition outcome data for students. The task to design a process for collecting, analyzing, coordinating, and sharing data regarding transitions is assigned to this Taskforce.
- 3) Consider the unique needs of the State's at-risk students with disabilities, (e.g., those coming out of youth corrections systems and diversion programs, Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) custody, and students with significant mental health needs, social and emotional learning deficits, and behavioral issues) and specifically target at-risk youth for appropriate and timely interventions and service coordination.
- 4) Ensure the person-centered planning (PCP) process starts early in the transition process and continues as required under the HCBS waiver rules into adult services and employment Statewide. Students with significant disabilities who will likely qualify for Home & Community-Based Services (HCBS) Medicaid waiver services should have PCP incorporated into the transition planning process.
- 5) Provide Statewide meaningful access to post-secondary education for students with disabilities. Meaningful access requires, among other things, effective communication with high schools, parents, and students to ensure full understanding of the eligibility and verification requirements for accommodations and modifications under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA, and information about services available at post-secondary institution.

The Transition Workgroup identified multiple state agencies and departments who will play a central role in achieving objectives in their strategic focus areas. Primarily, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must be leaders in this endeavor and include the State agencies and departments whose participation is critical to this process. The workgroup also identified some key non-State participants such as local school districts, special education joint agreements, Transition Planning Committees (TPC), the Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) (due to the well-established and growing importance of AT in preparing students with disabilities for adult life, including post-secondary education, vocational training and employment), centers for independent living, adult service providers, and others.

Co-Chairs: LaMetric Lane, Illinois State Board of Education
Mariel Hamer-Sinclair, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

E. Legislative Workgroup:

The Legislative Workgroup was formed after publishing 2017 EEOPD recommendations report to consider legislation and policy, advise the Taskforce on legislative and policy ideas, and review relevant pending legislation. The Legislative Workgroup will solidify its strategic focus areas in 2024, to include at least:

- 1) Monitor legislation relevant to the work of the Taskforce.
- 2) Keep members apprised of updates to proposed/pending legislation.

The Legislative Workgroup will identify the state agencies and departments who will play a central role in achieving objectives in their strategic focus areas. Partners will include at least employment service providers, people with disabilities, disability trade associations, and disability advocacy organizations.

Co-Chairs: Phil Milsk, Attorney and Public Policy Advocate
Mariel Hamer-Sinclair, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

F. Dignity in Pay Workgroup:

The Dignity in Pay Workgroup was formed to create a multi-year plan of recommended actions, outcomes, and benchmarks in accordance with paragraphs to help the State successfully eliminate the use of 14(c) certificates on July 1, 2029. The Dignity in Pay Workgroup’s focus areas include:

- 1) Identification, gathering, and analytics of State data to inform the work.
- 2) Consider people in Illinois earning subminimum wage who want to transition to competitive employment, people who do not wish to transition to competitive employment, existing State employment programs, capacity limits of providers, personal choice, use of emerging technologies, and access to reliable transportation.
- 3) Potential changes to State law and regulations.
- 4) Dissemination of relevant information and education and training needs Statewide.

Chair: Kimberly Mercer-Schlieder, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

IV. KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND UPDATES

The EEOPD Taskforce met quarterly between May 2024-April 2025. The meetings were held at locations in Springfield, IL and Chicago, IL with a remote option available for those unable to attend in person. The Taskforce worked diligently throughout the reporting period to review the 2023-2024 Annual report and continue efforts towards accomplishing the tasks outlined in Workgroup Activities Reports submitted throughout the reporting year.

The Taskforce worked closely with state agencies and stakeholders on the passage of The Dignity in Pay Act. This law mandates the phasing out of subminimum wages for workers with disabilities by December 31, 2029.

The Taskforce is also pleased with the passage of the Customized Employment for Persons with Disabilities Act. This purpose of this law is to ensure measures are in place that will aid individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or a similar condition in achieving and maintaining integrated competitive employment through the process of customized planning and negotiation.

The State of Illinois was chosen as a core state for the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON). The Division of Rehabilitation Services, Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, and Department of Mental Health will receive technical assistance and resources from national Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). The technical assistance will be provided to assist the state in four major priority areas:

- 1) Phasing out 14(c) Subminimum Wage in Compliance with House Bill (HB)793, The Dignity in Pay Act.
- 2) Creation of a Governmental Interagency Data Infrastructure.
- 3) Assistance with further development of the Statewide Employment First Strategic Planning and Workforce Development.
- 4) Mental Health Reentry Services for persons with disabilities involved in the justice system.

The State of Illinois was also chosen to receive technical assistance through APSE 1 NEON Project. The purpose of the project is to:

- 1) Aid individual 14(c) providers in their transformation efforts.
- 2) Create a learning community with other providers nationwide on 14(c) transformation.
- 3) Work with providers to create a short-term implementation and action plan to lay the foundation for achieving successful 14(c) transformation.

In addition, the EEOPD Taskforce voted to establish a Transportation Subgroup within the Employers Workgroup in March 2025. This subgroup will focus on identifying barriers and soliciting engagement from transportation providers throughout the state of Illinois.

Administrators within the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services, along with the Employment First Administrator, Employment First Coordinator, and EEOPD Taskforce Chairpersons also continued work to meet the following priorities:

- 1) Working to fully staff membership vacancies within the EEOPD Taskforce. The focus has been to bring aboard subject matter experts and those with lived experience.
- 2) Meeting with representatives of the Governor’s Office to ensure the EEOPD taskforce has appropriate resources to move recommendations forward and support the work of the workgroups within the EEOPD Taskforce at large.

V. WORKGROUP REPORTING ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. Workforce Development:

The Workforce Development Workgroup continued its efforts to ensure accessibility and disability inclusion was included in the broader diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by the Chief Equity Officer in the Governor’s Office. The workgroup continued working to foster a meaningful relationship with the Governor’s office to ensure disability and accessibility were included in their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) priorities. The Workgroup also continued work aiming towards

- Increasing the percentage of State employees with disabilities.
- Increasing the number of State employees with disabilities, and
- Disability Preference.
- Collaborating statewide efforts for expungement of criminal records, which is often a barrier for employment.
- Collaborating with other state disability-focused groups to be guest presenters for the taskforce meetings.

The Workforce Development Group offers the following recommendations:

- 1) Transforming the State into a model employer for people with disabilities who have criminal justice involvement. Many consumers who have criminal justice involvement do not get the employment opportunities they deserve and are highly qualified for because of their criminal justice involvement. The State becoming a model employer will ensure people with disabilities who have criminal justice involvement are able to gain and maintain employment in career fields that they are qualified for and determined to be successful in.
- 2) Transforming certain State Rules and Regulations that would allow people with behavioral health issues who have criminal justice involvement be able to gain and maintain employment opportunities in the health care field. Many consumers who have held positions as clinical staff in the mental health field have been terminated because of their criminal justice involvement – even after the individual has shown to be an excellent employee and great at their job tasks. Modifying State Rules and Regulations to allow these high-quality employees to work in the healthcare field is an important recommendation. Modifications will require statutory and regulatory changes.

- 3) Assisting people with disabilities who have criminal justice involvement with getting into training programs or classes that will teach them how to become self-employed and create their own business.
- 4) Establishing a Statewide training protocol on Employment First for new and existing employees. Using already existing materials and coordinating with ongoing training events will facilitate the process.

B. Provider Workgroup:

The Provider Workgroup met monthly during the period of May 2024-April 2025 (with the exception of the months of January 2025 and March 2025 due to scheduling conflicts).. The Provider Workgroup reviewed a variety of state and federal systems, policy and rule, to develop four recommendations surrounding strategies and functional changes to improve access to Competitive Integrated Employment and increase Provider sustainability. The Provider Workgroup reports that the recommendations reflect many hours of deliberation and work from the Provider Workgroup and are a true representation of the collective voice of the Provider Workgroup membership.

The Provider Workgroup offers the following recommendations:

- 1) Promote Logical Provider Connections.
Proposed steps for implementation:
 - Encourage IDHS-DRS to update the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) referral guidance with the CRP Manual and Policy/Operating Procedure.
- 2) Promote Rapid DRS VR Engagement.
Proposed steps for implementation:
 - Encourage IDHS_DRS to explore existing process, procedures, rules and policy to determine if efficiencies can be found.
 - Shortening eligibility determination for individuals who are clearly eligible.
- 3) Promote Education and Awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation Services available in the State of Illinois. Specifically, the Providers Workgroup encourages IDHS-DRS and IDHS-DDD to expand visibility to the scope of Vocational Rehabilitation and long-term employment programs.
Proposed steps for implementation:
 - The development of access material and portal with the aim of enhancing the public’s knowledge of available services, allowing for partners in Vocational Rehabilitation (including persons served, families, ISCs, CRPs, and other professional support networks) to better understand what is available – sets the stage for informed decision making.

- 4) Enhancing funding within programs, such as Supported Employment (SE) and Customized Employment (CE), designed to serve individuals with the most significant barriers to employment.

Proposed steps for implementation:

- Explore adjusting payment rates for services with feedback from a representative sample of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs).

C. Employer Workgroup:

The Employer Workgroup continued its efforts to recruit private employers to the workgroup as well as providers who have transitioned out of 14c Subminimum Wage certificates. Throughout the reporting period, the Workgroup was successful in recruiting the following members from the following companies: Kraig Kistinger (National Tube Supply), Beth Gonzalez (Pace Suburban Bus), Ben Schatzel (Stand Up Core Solutions), and Danielle Garacaris (Grainger).

Additionally, the Employer Workgroup will coordinate efforts to recruit members to the Transportation subgroup and share relevant information with the broader taskforce on a regular basis.

The Employer Workgroup offers no recommendations at this time.

D. Transition Workgroup:

In 2024, the EEOPD Transition Workgroup identified a critical need for a more cohesive and innovative approach to supporting individuals with disabilities as they transition from secondary education into adulthood. In response, the Workgroup established an Ad Hoc Committee tasked with drafting formal recommendations on behalf of the Workgroup for the full EEOPD Task Force's consideration.

This Ad Hoc Committee brought together a diverse group of experts and practitioners from across education, vocational training, rehabilitation services, and advocacy communities. Their collective focus: ensuring that all youth and young adults with disabilities—regardless of the path they choose—have equitable access to meaningful, informed, and supported transition opportunities.

A major priority of the Ad Hoc Committee has been the planning around the recommendation to develop a user-friendly DRS Training & College Initiative navigational tool in partnership with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

As this work progressed, the Transition Workgroup reconvened in October 2024 to receive an update from DRS on their expanded services and the work of the Ad Hoc Committee. The meeting also included a targeted training session led by Rebecca Clark (ADD TITLE) on Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) programs, equipping members with

deeper insight into how CTPs can expand access to inclusive postsecondary education and employment outcomes.

The Transition Workgroup's progress in 2024 reflects a growing commitment to building coordinated, accessible, and equitable systems that support successful transitions to adulthood for all individuals with disabilities in Illinois.

The Transition Workgroup offers the following recommendation:

- 1) Formal approval to lead the development of a statewide navigational tool to assist schools, vocational training programs, families, and people with disabilities in understanding and accessing the expanded DRS Training & College Initiative. This tool should be designed in plain language and be family-friendly, ensuring it is accessible, easy to use, and responsive to the diverse needs of students, families, and professionals. Its purpose is to create clear, consistent, and equitable pathways to education, training, and employment supports—ultimately improving transition outcomes for people with disabilities across Illinois.

Proposed steps for implementation:

- Form a project team with Transition Workgroup and DRS staff.
- Host input sessions (students, families, ISC agencies, colleges, training providers).
- Draft the tool content.
- Develop accessible formats, including short videos.
- Pilot test and refine.
- Statewide launch and dissemination.
- Annual updates and review.

E. Legislative Workgroup:

The Legislative Workgroup of the EEOPD Task Force met twice in 2024 to advance legislative strategies supporting the phase-out of subminimum wage and the expansion of competitive integrated employment (CIE) in Illinois.

The first meeting was held in February 2024, during legislative session, and focused on House Bill 793 (Dignity in Pay Act). Members discussed advocacy strategy to support its successful passage in the House and identified long-term legislative priorities the Task Force could pursue throughout the year to accelerate the 14(c) phase-out.

The second meeting, in July 2024, centered on reviewing draft recommendations developed by the EEOPD Provider Workgroup. The Legislative Workgroup assessed where legislative action could strengthen or complement those proposals and brainstormed new, forward-thinking policy ideas to further promote CIE opportunities statewide.

These efforts lay the groundwork for proactive, coordinated legislative engagement as Illinois works toward full implementation of the Dignity in Pay Act.

The Legislative Workgroup remains committed to:

1. Accepting legislative referrals on behalf of the EEOPD Taskforce.
2. Working with the Governor's Office and Legislators to remove barriers and support employment for people with disabilities.

The Legislative Workgroup offers no recommendations at this time.

F. Dignity in Pay Workgroup:

In August 2024, the EEOPD Task Force launched the Dignity in Pay Workgroup—a dynamic and committed group formed to lead the charge in developing Illinois' multi-year plan to phase out subminimum wage under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Meeting at least twice a month since its inception, the Workgroup has brought together over 40 diverse members, including people with developmental disabilities, provider agency leaders, representatives from multiple State of Illinois agencies, and national experts in disability employment and systems change. Together, the Workgroup has been laser-focused on crafting bold, actionable recommendations that will anchor the state's transformation to competitive integrated employment for all.

To deepen their work and tackle the complexity of systems change, the Workgroup formed three focused subgroups:

- System Transformation,
- Resources, and
- Equity and Evaluation.

The Governor's Office of Equity joined the effort to provide technical assistance and ensure that equity is woven throughout the plan—not just in outcomes, but in process, leadership, and accountability.

The multi-year plan is due to the legislature July 1, 2025, and momentum is strong. The collaboration, urgency, and shared commitment driving this effort reflect exactly what systemic change should look like—inclusive, expert-informed, and grounded in dignity for all.

The Dignity in Pay Workgroup looks forward to submitting its recommendations by July 1, 2025, in accordance with state law.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The EEOPD Taskforce recognizes that to accomplish the important tasks set before them, the Taskforce must continue to work diligently. This work will cover multiple years and consist of recommended actions, anticipated outcomes, benchmarks, and funding many more recommendations in the coming years. The EEOPD remains committed to increasing opportunities for competitive and integrated employment and ensuring it is the first option for persons with disabilities of working age in accordance with the Illinois Employment First Act. The EEOPD Taskforce will also continue to consider barriers facing individuals with disabilities in the workforce, while also supporting social and economic justice and protecting civil rights. The Taskforce will consider issues surrounding long-term systemic changes necessary to ensure personal growth and economic opportunities for persons with disabilities in Illinois.

Lastly, the Taskforce will:

- 1) Continue work to identify publicly available resources to support attainment and retainment of competitive integrated employment.
- 2) Continue to recommend the state be required to develop strategies to minimize the impact/loss of employment for people with significant disabilities/support needs.
- 3) Consider ways to enhance Community Day Services (CDS) programs to further incubate and support entrepreneurial/employment opportunities.
- 4) Work collaboratively with private employers on inclusion and diversifying the private workplace.
- 5) Address systemic barriers which hinder students with disabilities from achieving their post-secondary employment outcomes.
- 6) Aim to foster meaningful post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities.
- 7) Implement WIOA Unified State Plan by way of Workforce Partner group engagement (DCEO, DRS, ICCB, and IDES).
- 8) Support state agencies in their pursuit of increasing self-employment initiatives for people with disabilities.