



July 30, 2018

Dear Secretaries Acosta and Ross:

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) writes to you with recommendations for the newly established President's National Council for the American Worker.

NDRN is the national membership association for the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) agencies, the nationwide network of congressionally-mandated agencies that advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands), and there is a P&A and CAP affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navajo and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Collectively, the P&A/CAP agencies are the largest provider of legally based advocacy to individuals with disabilities in the United States.

The right employment is part of the promise of the United States, yet for far too long, it has been legal to employ individuals with disabilities in segregated settings and pay them less than the minimum wage. In 2011, NDRN published *Segregated and Exploited* which detailed the issues and subminimum wage and segregated employment.<sup>1</sup> The President's Council for the American Worker has the opportunity to meaningfully consider education and training that will not only benefit all Americans, including those with disabilities, but also benefit the economy. NDRN exhorts the President's National Council for the American Worker to consider the inclusion of the disability perspective in all its upcoming work and recommendations. The Purpose section of The Executive Order (E.O.) states, "My Administration will champion effective, results-driven education and training so that American students and workers can obtain the skills they need to succeed in the jobs of today and the future." This goal must be inclusive of **ALL** American students and workers. Indeed, while reports from the U.S. Department of Labor highlight approximately the addition of 213,000 jobs, contrasting reports show that the participation in the workforce for persons with disabilities has decreased by one percent within the last year. This is not acceptable. The President's National Council for the American Worker has the opportunity to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive inclusive, meaningful, and accessible education and training for employment. This opportunity must not be squandered.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ndrn.org/images/Documents/Resources/Publications/Reports/Segregated-and-Exploited.pdf>

Specifically NDRN strongly recommends the following:

- As outlined in the E.O., the National Council will be comprised by a number of officials. Members of the Council must bring to the table a knowledge of disability policy from the discipline they represent. Policies surrounding individuals with disabilities must be considered at the outset, woven throughout any recommendation, not retrofitted at the end.
- The E.O. establishes the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board. The board will be comprised of 25 members from, “citizens outside the Federal Government.” Given the fact that individuals with disabilities comprise 12.6% of the population in the United States, NDRN firmly believes that at least one individual appointed by the President to serve on the Advisory Board must be an individual with a disability who is successfully employed in the community in an integrated setting and earning minimum wage or above. Specifically, the E.O states, “The Board shall . . . offer diverse opinions on how the Federal Government can improve training and re-training for American workers.” Given the impact of this directive on individuals with disabilities, representatives of the disability community must be included on the Board to ensure that any opinions offered are inclusive of the disability community.

NDRN thanks you for your consideration of our suggestions and looks forward to being a resource to the Council as it moves forward in its work. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Lowe, Senior Public Policy Analyst at [Amanda.lowe@ndrn.org](mailto:Amanda.lowe@ndrn.org)

Sincerely,



Curt Decker  
Executive Director