

Waterman, Robert - WHD

From: Linda J Kastner <kastner93@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2015 10:53 AM
To: WHDPRAComments
Subject: Control Number 1235-0001

My name is Linda Kastner and I live in Midwest City, Oklahoma. I am a member of the board of directors for the Mid-Del Group Home, Inc., but more importantly I am a parent with an adult son with intellectual disability. Mid-Del Group Home is an agency that provides residential and vocational services to adults with developmental disabilities who have a primary diagnosis of intellectual disability. This agency serves over 40 individuals, primarily from the Midwest City, Del City communities but also clients are transported from another residential facility about 20 miles away to our work center so that they too have the opportunity to work, make a paycheck, and feel the same satisfaction for accomplishment that the rest of us get from our days work.

My son has worked at this center since he graduated from high school in 1998. Of course I had hoped that my son would be able to have a regular job in the community where he would be productive, accepted, and feel a sense of achievement. He had that hope too, and initially he and I, as well as staff at the work center, would talk about that. Josh has to be frequently reminded to stay on task, to mind his own business, to quit tattling, to blow his nose. In many, many ways he is like a 5 year old. He would not survive in competitive employment. This description, in one way or another, fits most of the clients that this work center serves. For some of the individuals that are employed by Mid-Del Group Home, in their entire work day (8-3:30) they may only actually complete the amount of work that would be expected in just an hour in competitive employment. While the prospect for every person to make at least minimum wage is ideal, it is just not logical. Without Mid-Del Group Home's work center and work centers like it these people would not be employed at all. They would be sitting at home idly, coping with all the toll that takes on a human being both mentally and physically.

Additionally, at the Mid-Del Group Home, Inc., profits made by the work center fund the overage expenses for their four group homes. Each of these homes houses six individuals. One of our homes receives no funding from the state. There was a need for residential services, Mid-Del Group Home stepped up in an attempt to address that need feeling confident that the work center would be able to support it--and it has for over 20 years. If minimum wages are required for all participants in the work center, whether they are working or not, or worse, if the work center is eliminated, those homes will eventually be eliminated as well leaving the people that live there homeless. It's a complete system.

I may not be voicing my concerns in the appropriate arena. This forum may have only to do with the reporting piece for the 14c certification. As I read the letter from the Department of Labor I am not clear on who I need to address. Maybe its my legislators regarding the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. I will write to all of those entities because when I see the words "reduce subminimum wage or eliminate work centers" I become very concerned. The impact this will have on individuals with disabilities AND their families who will have to figure out how to pick up the pieces is horrendous. What looks like progress on paper will result in a gigantic step back in reality.

Linda Kastner
Midwest City, Oklahoma
[Kastner93@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kastner93@sbcglobal.net)