

U.S. Reps. Steil, Grothman: Lead colleagues to urge President Biden to protect jobs for workers with cognitive disabilities

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Wisconsin Congressmen Bryan Steil (WI-01) and Glenn Grothman (WI-06) [urged President Joe Biden to protect jobs for workers with cognitive disabilities](#). Congresswoman Diana Harshbarger (TN-01) and Congressman Madison Cawthorn (NC-11) joined Steil and Grothman in this effort. Read more on the importance of protecting these jobs in [Empower Wisconsin](#).

“Speaker Pelosi and President Biden are ramming a \$1.9 trillion spending bill through Congress that has serious consequences for Wisconsin workers and families. Those with cognitive disabilities rely on organizations, like Careers Industries in Racine or KANDU Industries in Janesville, not only for employment, but for the caring, supportive community and social opportunities they provide. I’ve spoken to these workers and their families. The message is clear: they do not want to lose their job. We urge President Biden to listen to the nearly 5,000 Wisconsinites who benefit from these local organizations and protect jobs for this vulnerable population,” said Steil.

“We are asking the administration to pay special attention to the provision in the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief package that would remove Section 14(c) from the Fair Labor Standards Act and affects thousands of individuals with disabilities in Wisconsin,” said Grothman. “If Section 14(c) is eliminated, which would likely result in the closure of organizations like RCS Empowers in Sheboygan and Northwoods Inc. in Portage, it will be very difficult for these wonderful folks to find meaningful employment. I strongly encourage President Biden and members of his

Administration to tour a few CRPs [Community Rehabilitation Providers] and see for themselves the wonderful work that is done there. There are eight CRPs in Wisconsin's Sixth District and I am confident that you could do a surprise visit to any one of them and come away very impressed."

"I am extremely grateful to Representatives Grothman and Steil for their efforts on behalf of my son. My son wants to keep his job. He wants to work, and I am sure that if 14 (c) goes away he will no longer be working and will lose what he so values- his job," said Rick Wilson, Wisconsin A-Team Champion.

"Instead of relief, persons with disabilities will be burdened with the loss of employment and services if Section 14 (c) is eliminated," said Thomas M., Wisconsin A-Team Champion.

In the current version of the House of Representatives' \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill, a provision is included to eliminate Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Protecting this provision is critical to workers with cognitive disabilities and their families. Both Steil and Grothman have visited with workers and families in their districts who benefit from the opportunities provided by Community Rehabilitation Providers. In Wisconsin alone, nearly 5,000 adults benefit from Section 14(c). It remains to be seen if the Senate will include the elimination of Section 14(c) in its version of the stimulus bill.

[Read the letter to President Biden below:](#)

Dear President Biden,

We write to you today on an important issue impacting citizens across the nation. Many people are concerned about the impacts of terminating the protections and flexibilities provided by Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act will have on workers with disabilities, especially those with significant intellectual and developmental disabilities. We urge you to take these concerns into account.

As you know, many individuals with disabilities often find great benefit working in environments that cater to their unique needs. Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP), who make up the majority of 14(c) certificate holders, support employment access and vocational training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. CRPs provide individuals with disabilities what other workplaces cannot, including transportation services, access to qualified rehabilitation professionals, and

employment security and stability. When you visit a CRP, you quickly learn when speaking to the individuals who work there that they get more out of the job than simply a wage. They get a sense of purpose and a community that supports them. The rewards of being employed go far beyond just the employee, extending to the families of those with disabilities, the organizations they touch, and the entire surrounding community. Few things are more inspirational than seeing the pride of work that is evident in the men and women working in organizations like these.

Unfortunately, your administration appears to be racing through consideration of a Coronavirus relief package that may include an increase in the minimum wage and the termination of Section 14(c) certificates. When we have discussions on far reaching policies, we need to know what the potential impacts are. One of the unfortunate impacts of a minimum wage increase coupled with the termination of Section 14(c) will be the destruction of job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Rather than experiencing the dignity of earning a paycheck like every other American, many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be limited to day rehabilitation services or unpaid volunteer work, both of which are options that already are available to people who choose to work under a certificate, or they will have no option other than being at home, a choice that has an enormous economic impact on families and a demoralizing, negative effect on the individuals who are left without the job of their choice. It is disrespectful to the individuals who choose to work under Section 14(c) to eliminate this option without any consideration of their desires. Although they are trying to be heard, their voices are being drowned out by people whose lives will not be affected by the elimination of 14(c). We must maintain flexibility for these individuals so they do not lose their jobs and the support those jobs provide.

On behalf of these working men and women, their families, and their advocates, we strongly urge you to fully consider the impact that a one-size-fits-all policy has on every member of society. Everyone deserves a chance to have meaningful employment and feel valued.

Sincerely,

Bryan Steil

Glenn Grothman

Diana Harsharger

Madison Cawthorn