

## U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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## SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2020

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The Commission convened in the conference room at Champlain Community Services, 512 Troy Avenue, Colchester, Vermont at 1:00 p.m., David Kladney, Subcommittee Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

DAVID KLADNEY, Subcommittee Chair

DEBO P. ADEGBILE, Commissioner

GAIL HERIOT, Commissioner

MAUREEN RUDOLPH, General Counsel

COMMISSIONER ASSISTANTS PRESENT:

AMY ROYCE

ALISON SOMIN

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ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS:

MICKEY BONGES, Essex High School Transition  
Specialist

JOHN CAMMARANO, Homewood Suites, Community  
Employer

BRYAN DAGUE, Think College Vermont

MONICA HUTT, Commissioner, Vermont Department  
of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

\*JENNIE MASTERSON, Developmental Disabilities  
Services Division, Vermont Supported  
Employment Services Coordinators

MICHELLE PAYA, Champlain Community Services

MIKE REILLY, Champlain Community Services

ELIZABETH SIGHTLER, Agency Executive Director,  
Champlain Community Services

JAMES SMITH, Policy Manager, Vermont Division  
of Vocational Rehabilitation

\* Present via Skype

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A G E N D A

I. SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

    A. Opening Statements by roundtable  
    participants ..... 6

    B. Commissioner Questions ..... 20

II. ADJOURN MEETING ..... 83

## P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:15 p.m.)

OPERATOR: Good day and welcome to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Vermont Roundtable on subminimum wage. At this time, I would like to turn the conference over to Commissioner David Kladney. Sir, please go ahead.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you very much. This meeting of the Subcommittee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights comes to order at 1:15 p.m. Eastern Time on March 4th, 2020.

This subcommittee was approved to conduct site visits for our subminimum wages project. The roundtable has been convened to discuss business practices with employers and staff officials regarding workers and disabilities employed in Vermont.

I'm Commissioner David Kladney. I've been appointed by the Commission Chair Catherine Lhamon to chair this subcommittee. Also serving on this subcommittee are Commissioner Debo Adebile, Commissioner Gail Heriot, and Commission Chair Catherine Lhamon. In addition to me, Commissioners Adebile and Heriot are present. Chair Lhamon will not join us today.

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1           Based on that a quorum of the  
2 subcommittee is present. Is the court reporter  
3 present?

4           COURT REPORTER: Yes.

5           COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: I will welcome  
6 everyone to this roundtable and particularly  
7 appreciate the professionals who have made  
8 themselves available to answer our questions and  
9 opened your doors so that we can better understand  
10 your operations. In addition, I'd like to thank  
11 Commission staff who worked so hard to make this  
12 meeting possible.

13           The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is  
14 collecting information for our report on the  
15 treatment of individuals with disabilities in  
16 different types of employment programs.  
17 Established in 1957, the U.S. Commission on Civil  
18 Rights is an independent bipartisan agency charged  
19 with informing the President, Congress, and the  
20 public on the development of national civil rights  
21 policy and the enhancement of federal civil rights  
22 laws.

23           The Commission is here today as part of  
24 our project on the 14(c) program and the payment of  
25 subminimum wages to people with disabilities. We

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1 held a briefing on November 15th, 2019 where we  
2 heard from a range of national experts on the  
3 topic. Materials from this briefing and video of  
4 the testimony and questions are available on the  
5 Commission's website at [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov).

6 We are pleased to supplement our record  
7 with information we gather here today. Again,  
8 thank you for your time. Today, each individual  
9 will make a brief presentation with an  
10 introduction, giving their name, their role, and a  
11 description of their responsibilities. Please  
12 limit your introduction to no more than three  
13 minutes. Following introductions, we'll have  
14 approximately an hour for questions and answers.

15 I caution all speakers, including our  
16 Commissioners, to refrain from speaking over each  
17 other for ease of transcription. I ask everyone  
18 present to please silence your phones.

19 And Ms. Hutt, we'll start with you,  
20 please.

## 21 **I. SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

### 22 **OPENING STATEMENTS BY ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS**

23 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure. Thank you.  
24 So my name is Monica Hutt. I'm the Commissioner of  
25 the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and

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1 Independent Living here in the state of Vermont.  
2 That department is part of the Agency of Human  
3 Services and under the auspices of the Department  
4 which we, for shorthand, will just call DAIL.  
5 That's the acronym that we use.

6 Under the auspices of DAIL are both the  
7 Development of Disability Services unit, so  
8 services for individuals with developmental or  
9 intellectual disabilities here in the state of  
10 Vermont brought under the purview of the Department  
11 as does Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Division  
12 for the Blind and Visually Impaired, which both of  
13 those entities are responsible for rehabilitation  
14 and support around work.

15 So all of those entities are a part of  
16 the Department. And I can bet one of the things  
17 that Vermont has done really well, and James will  
18 allude to this a little bit more, that I think is  
19 to coordinate the work with Voc Rehab and  
20 developmental disabilities to ensure that we have a  
21 really cohesive, integrated system in terms of work  
22 supports with folks with developmental and  
23 intellectual disabilities.

24 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Mr. Dague? Oh,  
25 you can't. Mr. Smith?

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1 MR. SMITH: Sure. So my name is James  
2 Smith. I'm the policy manager for the Division of  
3 Vocation Rehabilitation. As Monica said, we are  
4 part of DAIL, and we are collocated with the  
5 District for Developmental Services.

6 We have a long history of close  
7 collaboration with the developmental service  
8 division going back since -- it's probably before  
9 this, but as long as when history goes back to the  
10 mid '80s where we used grant opportunities and  
11 joint funding are the methodologies to move towards  
12 a totally supportive employment approach focused on  
13 competitive employment.

14 But it also has an extensive presence  
15 within the high schools, 57 high schools in the  
16 state. We have 14 and half VR counselors who are  
17 posted to every single high school in the state.  
18 And so there's a great deal of coordination happens  
19 there between our school Voc Rehab counselors and  
20 the local designated agencies and specialized  
21 agencies that provide services.

22 And I think I'll leave it at that.

23 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Beth?

24 MS. SIGHTLER: So I'm Elizabeth  
25 Sightler. I'm the Executive Director here at

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1 Champlain Community Services. We're one of the 16  
2 provider agencies in the state. So there are 10  
3 designated agencies and --no, I'm sorry -- 11  
4 designated agencies and 5 specialized service  
5 agencies.

6 We're what's called the specialized  
7 service agency which means, for us, coincidentally,  
8 we specialize and support employment. So I think  
9 that's probably why you're here today because  
10 that's kind of our bailiwick. That's what we do.

11 We were the last sheltered workshop to  
12 close in 2002. And since then, we with the other  
13 agencies -- each of the agencies has a support  
14 employment program. And we have a master grant  
15 with the state that actually requires us to have a  
16 45 percent employment rate for the people in  
17 services. CCS is really proud of our employment  
18 rate. We're at --

19 MS. PAYA: 2018, we're at 81 percent.  
20 We're averaging about 79 percent closing out our  
21 2019.

22 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: That was  
23 Michelle Paya?

24 MS. SIGHTLER: Paya, yeah. So support  
25 employment for us throughout the state is you were

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1 asking about transition from high school. And for  
2 us and I think for a lot of agencies, that  
3 continuum is really essential, making sure that  
4 while there's transition planning happening in  
5 schools that it's a continuum and not necessarily  
6 just for students who are going to come into IDD  
7 services here in the agencies. But to make sure  
8 they're transitioning into support employment just  
9 upon graduation.

10 So there are a few different programs  
11 that are happening. CCS, we have something called  
12 School2Work program which is kind of what it sounds  
13 like, right? It's to make sure that students are  
14 graduating and have employment.

15 We also work with five area high  
16 schools with the bridging program. And again,  
17 that's working on -- you'll be able to speak more  
18 articulate to this, Michelle. But that's working  
19 on making sure that people are prepared for  
20 employment.

21 Just sort of from my perspective,  
22 having been in this field for 23 years now, I see a  
23 big transition, no pun intended, between students  
24 who are graduating now and when I first started.  
25 Now they're really expecting to have jobs. Now

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1 they anticipate that they will be working. There's  
2 a whole different psychology about where they  
3 belong in the workplace.

4 So I think I'll stop there.

5 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: That was 85  
6 percent?

7 MS. SIGHTLER: Our agency. Our agency.  
8 I mean, that's -- throughout the state, though,  
9 it's -- is it 49?

10 MS. MASTERSON: Forty-nine percent.

11 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Mr. Cammarano?

12 MR. CAMMARANO: Yes, I'm John  
13 Cammarano. I'm the general manager at the Homewood  
14 Suites hotel here in South Burlington. I work for  
15 a local family who we own seven hotels locally and  
16 five others outside the area. We also own some  
17 senior communities. They build apartments, single  
18 family homes.

19 Several years ago, I was approached by  
20 Ron Turner from CCS to see if we'd be interested in  
21 piloting the program for our company. Sat with our  
22 vice president of operations. He said, yeah, let's  
23 try it with Homewood Suites. Let's give it a shot.

24 We've been doing that, I guess, about  
25 almost three years now. Had several students. I

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1 have currently two students who are out of high  
2 school and are working for us at salary. And we  
3 have a student from South Burlington High School.

4 We've done some work with Voc Rehab  
5 through Burlington High School as well bringing  
6 groups of students into the hotel to do various  
7 things, give them an idea of what the hotel  
8 business is about, all the different departments,  
9 all the different options that they have and then  
10 let them pick.

11 We have Hosan Coh (phonetic) and Ashley  
12 Koda (phonetic) right now working for us. And  
13 they've both done everything in the hotel in their  
14 jobs and have been very successful. And we want to  
15 continue to grow to other facilities in the area,  
16 so --

17 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you.  
18 Mickey Bonges?

19 MS. BONGES: Yes, I'm an employment  
20 transition specialist at Essex High School, and we  
21 were part of the special ed department. And last  
22 year, I think we placed 65 students, mostly within  
23 the community in jobs.

24 We pay them a stipend which is minimum  
25 wage per hour. And we work very closely with Voc

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1 Rehab. We have the youth counselors come into our  
2 schools. We meet with them regularly. We make  
3 sure that the kids are on their radar.

4 We work with students' case managers to  
5 make sure that things are lined up. We have an  
6 adult service night every year where we get all the  
7 players together. We're really lucky in Vermont  
8 because our adult service agencies are the best.  
9 They really are.

10 So they come and they meet the students  
11 in kind of a non-threatening setting which is in a  
12 meeting. And they have dinner, and they meet the  
13 families coming up. And they alleviate a lot of  
14 fears of our parents and our families. It's just a  
15 great place to be and work.

16 And what else about our program? We  
17 were given -- our program rather exploded because  
18 we have four vans now. So now if you build it,  
19 they will come. So now we have grown from about 35  
20 to 40 kids to 65. So we have two job coaches and  
21 two coordinators, and we serve just basically now  
22 anybody who is on an IEP can be referred.

23 So that's about it.

24 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Ms. Paya?

25 MS. PAYA: Yes, hi. My name is

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1 Michelle Paya, and I am the director of our  
2 education employment services here at Champlain  
3 Community Services. So my role is really to  
4 oversee all of our programs within that model of  
5 education and employment.

6 So we partner very closely with Bryan  
7 Dague within his post-secondary programs with Think  
8 College. We also have a global campus program here  
9 that really inspires our folks to become leaders  
10 within their community and learn a lot of those  
11 presentation skills.

12 As Beth was stating, we have a  
13 continuum program. So we think of our programs as  
14 transition to retirement and providing those  
15 lifelong services. So people can really build upon  
16 their skills, build upon their -- I call social  
17 capital because I find employment as the means for  
18 most of social capital that we all experience.

19 So really to build on those financial  
20 stabilities and their social capital and their  
21 quality of life. So we start that with a bridging  
22 program which is a collaboration of five area  
23 school systems. And it's building those  
24 independent, well rounded skills so when  
25 individuals are ready to take on that leap of

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1 employment after school, they have the skills  
2 behind them to really propel them.

3 That has been one of our signature  
4 programs. We have a lot of schools that are  
5 actually seeking out that support now.

6 MS. SIGHTLER: Would you speak to  
7 careers versus jobs?

8 MS. PAYA: Yes.

9 MS. SIGHTLER: Beth Sightler, Executive  
10 Director.

11 MS. PAYA: So I believe -- I truly  
12 believe that Vermont as a whole, we don't find  
13 jobs. We find careers. Careers are sustainable.  
14 Jobs are just a placement. We're very proud of  
15 that. We have strong partnerships with Voc Rehab.  
16 We have strong partnerships with schools. And we  
17 as a collaborative state come together and  
18 understand that it's about placing people where  
19 their best selves are going to be found.

20 We are currently looking through our  
21 bridging program. We're looking at that whole  
22 career model. And within folks with disabilities,  
23 you have typical jobs that most folks with  
24 disabilities tend to gravitate towards. And we  
25 want out of that. We want out of that box of

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1 people only can work in grocery stores or can only  
2 work in janitorial means.

3 We're going after these industries, and  
4 we want to train the next leaders. We want to take  
5 these talents and extract them from the folks that  
6 we clearly see have those skills and abilities to  
7 make a difference in the business community and get  
8 them into those higher paying jobs, those more  
9 career-based industries.

10 Career explorations within our bridging  
11 program is doing just that. We're finding out,  
12 what is your dream job? And no dream job is non-  
13 attainable. Everything is attainable if you can  
14 find the additional potential in the work you're  
15 doing.

16 So we're going out there and we're  
17 teaching these students at a young age that here is  
18 okay to shoot for. You don't have to shoot here.  
19 And really going out to the industry and giving  
20 that education of, yes, you can work in a grocery  
21 work, but you can also manage a grocery store. You  
22 can also be in whatever that you're looking at.

23 So we're really proud of that in  
24 Vermont that we are looking at that long-term  
25 career. And that's where people stay in careers.

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1 People stay and work when they're finding their  
2 best selves.

3 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you. We  
4 have a Jennie Masterson who is actually Skyping in.  
5 So --

6 MS. MASTERSON: Yes, hello.

7 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- I hope you  
8 can hear her.

9 MS. MASTERSON: Can you hear me?

10 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Ms. Masterson,  
11 we can hear you. But we also have a phone presence  
12 --

13 MS. MASTERSON: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- people on the  
15 phone.

16 MS. MASTERSON: So it's Jennie  
17 Masterson, and I work for Developmental  
18 Disabilities Services Division in the area of  
19 supported employment, post-secondary education with  
20 transition, and I also do a little bit work on the  
21 quality management team. But my primary focus is  
22 in working with all of the 16 agencies across the  
23 state that have supported employment program  
24 projects.

25 I also work with post-secondary ed. So

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1 I've worked with Bryan over the years to convert  
2 the college federal grant from a federal grant into  
3 a model that adheres the Medicaid waiver in home  
4 and community-based service funding for individuals  
5 to pay their fees to go to a college.

6 I also work with the other two post-  
7 secondary ed organizations that we've partnered  
8 with across the state. And I also helped to set up  
9 and implement and support really the Project  
10 SEARCH. We have three Project SEARCH sites for  
11 either the last year of high school as well as  
12 adults.

13 We sort of made Project SEARCH a little  
14 bit more job-centric. And we now have young adults  
15 and older both participating in Project SEARCH  
16 which is an industry-based one-year program for  
17 these individuals to learn complex and technical  
18 skills and come out with a job.

19 And often, the host site is -- in our  
20 case, the host sites are hospitals. Three  
21 hospitals are involved. And each year, each of  
22 those hospitals hires a percentage of those  
23 graduates.

24 So I'm involved in those three teams,  
25 and my job is to really just try to help with

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1 systems, help with the processors, help with  
2 quality improvement, help with funding. Anything  
3 that it takes really to enable the people in the  
4 field doing the work to be as successful as  
5 possible.

6 I've worked with James Smith here for  
7 many, many, years. And I think we started working  
8 together in the 1990s. There's a lot of longevity  
9 of relationships in our government here and in our  
10 organizations in Vermont.

11 So that's what I do. And I'd just also  
12 add that I do have a little bit of data that I can  
13 share with you later in the evening if you would  
14 like. And it's also just noteworthy that in  
15 Vermont, unlike many other states, we don't  
16 classify people into two groups. Some states label  
17 people as either being employable or not  
18 employable. And we don't do that here.

19 We believe that anybody can work if  
20 we're able to give them customized and appropriate  
21 supports. And we are lucky. We are allowed to  
22 have a lot of really, really, very involved  
23 businesses and employers who are very good to work  
24 with.

25 So I guess I'll stop there.

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1                   COMMISSIONER HUTT:        May I clarify  
2 something?

3                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:  Yes?

4                   COMMISSIONER HUTT:        I just want to  
5 clarify one thing.

6                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:  Go right ahead.  
7 This is Ms. Hutt, Monica Hutt.

8                   COMMISSIONER HUTT:        Yeah, Monica Hutt.  
9 I just want to ask this question.  I'll frame it as  
10 a clarification, but it is, in fact, a question.

11                   When we gave our federal folks here a  
12 statistic of 49 percent employment, that's for  
13 individuals that are actively engaged in  
14 developmental services in the state of Vermont.  
15 That is not the entire statistic for employment for  
16 individuals with intellectual or developmental  
17 disabilities in the state of Vermont.  Those are  
18 just for those folks that are in services.

19                   Our developmental services system does  
20 not serve everybody who's got a developmental  
21 disability or an intellectual disability.  There  
22 are individuals who don't qualify for services  
23 because we've got a couple of tiers and doors to  
24 get into services.

25                   So one is clinical eligibility.  But

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1 then you have to be in a pretty significant crisis  
2 or you need to be graduating with no other support.  
3 So there are many individuals across the state of  
4 Vermont with a developmental disability or  
5 intellectual disability who we are not serving.  
6 And so that 49 percent statistic is not specific to  
7 the whole but just to those individuals in  
8 services.

9 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And could they  
10 be working?

11 COMMISSIONER HUTT: They absolutely  
12 could. And that's what James was referring to when  
13 he talked about those individuals will be going  
14 directly through Voc Rehab, not through a  
15 supportive employment door partnered with Voc  
16 Rehab. That's the distinction.

17 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you --

18 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

19 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- very much.

20 **COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS**

21 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: One of the  
22 questions I have that I can't read because I don't  
23 have my glasses on is -- oh, first thing I'd like  
24 to ask is about the hospital project, Project  
25 SEARCH. We went there and were shown here in

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1 Burlington the Project SEARCH location. And we  
2 were under the impression it was only two years  
3 old. But that is not correct, is it?

4 COMMISSIONER HUTT: That's --

5 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Here in  
6 Burlington?

7 MS. MASTERSON: The Burlington site is  
8 in its third or fourth year. It's the newest site  
9 we have. The first site we became involved with is  
10 that Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Hanover,  
11 New Hampshire. And that one is going through its  
12 tenth now. The second one was set up in Rutland,  
13 Vermont and that's at Rutland Regional Medical  
14 Center. That's gone into its --

15 (Simultaneous speaking.)

16 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Did you say -- she  
17 said tenth year.

18 MS. MASTERSON: -- seventh year now --  
19 sixth year.

20 MS. BONGES: But it was at the gym. It  
21 was at --

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 MS. BONGES: -- for several years  
24 beforehand, correct.

25 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: But that Project

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1 SEARCH worked out of a gymnasium, didn't it?

2 MS. BONGES: Apparently. Yeah, well --

3 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: A fitness  
4 center?

5 MS. BONGES: -- there's five different  
6 ones.

7 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Another question  
8 I have is concerning supported employment. At the  
9 center we went to this morning, they talked about a  
10 minimum of contacting their clients on the job  
11 every two weeks to make sure everything is going  
12 well, checking in with the employer to make sure  
13 the employer knows how to deal with things and  
14 things like that.

15 Yesterday, it was described to us about  
16 an employee they had that was severely disabled.  
17 And his ability was to take a sheet of paper and  
18 put it through a shredder and continue that.  
19 Couldn't -- well, according to what we were told,  
20 he couldn't do anything else. If it got jammed, he  
21 couldn't unjam it and something like that.

22 And your philosophy of anybody can get  
23 a job, how would it work with a person like that in  
24 supported employment here in Vermont?

25 MS. PAYA: Can I take that?

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1                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:     Sure.     You've  
2     got to say your name.

3                   MS. PAYA:     Yes, Michelle Paya.     So one  
4     thing that we would look at that is we do a lot of  
5     task analysis and look at where we can build  
6     teaching and opportunities to add in assistive  
7     technology to help that individual be as  
8     independent as possible at the job site.

9                   So I don't know this particular site  
10    that you're speaking of.     But for us, we have  
11    individuals that have different abilities, and we  
12    definitely look at that assistive technology.

13                  And really, assistive technology is  
14    whatever you want to make of it.     It could be  
15    something very technical or it could be something  
16    very, very simple.     And we go through an analysis  
17    and an assessment to really figure out what would  
18    be the best adaptive equipment that we can support  
19    this individual so he or she can do it as much as  
20    possible.

21                  COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:     So I don't want  
22    to put you on the spot.     But if you can give me an  
23    example or if you can think of one in a few  
24    minutes, that would be great.     But an actual case,  
25    example, I don't want any names or anything.     But

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1 something that would give us some perspective.

2 MS. PAYA: Yeah. So I have a good  
3 example. Again, this is Michelle Paya. So there  
4 was an individual that he actually created his own  
5 business, Purely Patrick. And what he does is he  
6 fills mason jars full of products that he sells.  
7 It could be a cookie mix or it could be a soup mix.  
8 But it's a mix that he sells. And then people take  
9 that, and he sells them at different Airbnbs and  
10 whatnot.

11 And his dexterity was difficult for him  
12 to take the product and pour it into the jar. So  
13 through the assistive technology places, they  
14 created this mechanical piece that he had a pusher  
15 that would actually scoop and he would hit the  
16 button. And it would come up and it would pour  
17 into the jar.

18 So that's a type of assistive tool that  
19 we would create or we would find in order to adapt  
20 to that job.

21 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Any other  
22 examples regarding people who are intellectually  
23 and severely intellectually disabled?

24 MS. PAYA: For intellectual, yes, we  
25 do. We could do a lot of iWatches or other -- I

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1 think of individuals that may be they're doing a  
2 task that can't do multiple tasks at once. We  
3 could have an electronic piece that will give a  
4 reminder of 15 minutes or every 10 minutes,  
5 depending on how long a process could take so they  
6 know the progression of the task and they don't  
7 have to be reminded by a person. So you could use  
8 something like that.

9 Or the watches have been really good.  
10 The iWatches have been great for that. We have  
11 communication devices that help with task analysis  
12 that help individuals go on to the next task so  
13 they don't have to have those verbal reminders.

14 One thing that we did at the local mall  
15 for a young lady, she had -- for her to continue  
16 with her task, she needed reminders. One thing  
17 that we're really very mindful of is our supports,  
18 we want to be in the background. We want them to  
19 be very subtle. We don't want people to feel like,  
20 I have my support staff with me and they're  
21 overseeing me all the time.

22 So for her, what we did, she was in a  
23 public place. We did a walkie-talkie system where  
24 she had an earpiece and a walkie-talkie on her hip  
25 like everybody in the mall does. And then her

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1 staff was mingled into the community or within the  
2 area and they sat at the table in the dining hall.  
3 And they had the microphone and their walkie-  
4 talkie.

5 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: You're talking  
6 about their support staff?

7 MS. PAYA: They're support staff. So  
8 whenever she needed to be reminded to do something  
9 or to watch for something, they would give her a  
10 cue through her microphone and it was -- Nobody  
11 knew. She would do those next tasks and nobody  
12 knew any different because it was so integrated  
13 into the environment that nobody knew that she was  
14 receiving support.

15 And she was receiving very valuable  
16 support that continued her to excel at her job  
17 where at one point, she ended up being independent  
18 in her job.

19 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you.  
20 Another question I have, and that would be my last  
21 one for a while, is we've seen the operation of the  
22 jurisdiction here in Burlington. And I understand  
23 this is the largest city in the state, and you have  
24 other counties. And that each county, I think  
25 someone said 11 sites or something like that or 11

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1 jurisdictions, I think.

2 And I was wondering what kind of  
3 success rates you have in the smaller counties  
4 where there are less availability of positions and  
5 jobs and industry and people like Mr. Cammarano and  
6 his outfit. Anybody care to take that?

7 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Jennie, do you want  
8 to speak to that?

9 MS. MASTERSON: I sure can. So it's a  
10 challenge certainly. As you know, we have very  
11 rural pockets in this state. Farming communities  
12 and the Northeast Kingdom up in the northeastern  
13 part of the state there's probably anything  
14 happening. So the employment programs or projects  
15 that are attached to the agencies in those more  
16 rural locations, they do struggle.

17 But the crux of their success is really  
18 based on establishing expert relationships with any  
19 and all employers in their communities. And we  
20 have to also keep in mind that we're not looking at  
21 everybody working full time. So there's an  
22 opportunity to oftentimes create jobs.

23 So for example, there's -- I don't know  
24 if Bill Ash is in the room today. I don't think I  
25 heard him. But over and along the Connecticut

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1 River, what we call the Upper Valley area of  
2 Vermont, very, very rural.

3 So Lisa, the employment coordinator of  
4 there who is helping people find jobs does have a  
5 hard time locating jobs. But then we look at the  
6 data. I see that the employment rate is 49, 50  
7 percent in some of these places. One of the most  
8 rural employment programs we have increased the  
9 employment rate by 6 percent and has an employment  
10 rate of 61 percent for the past fiscal year 2019.

11 So there's a lot of job creation that  
12 happens working with small businesses in Vermont.  
13 I think more than half of Vermont businesses are  
14 small, small, small businesses of employers under  
15 20 people. So it is an arduous task but remarkably  
16 done by a lot of really dedicated people.

17 COMMISSIONER HUTT: So I'd like to add  
18 to that. This is Monica Hutt. I think, again,  
19 it's important to back up a little bit when you  
20 think about supported employment in the estate of  
21 Vermont. And a couple of things are really  
22 important to know.

23 One is that I think that there is -- I  
24 don't think there is a philosophy in the state of  
25 Vermont that really speaks to the value of

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1 community and each contributing community member.  
2 So I think that we really pin much of the  
3 employment on this idea that we're trying to build  
4 across any community a really rich fabric.

5 And so people have varying abilities  
6 regardless of disability. And we try to help  
7 people to remember and to realize that's an  
8 important component of community in general.

9 Secondly, I would say that Vermont  
10 right now is benefitting from a very low  
11 unemployment rate. So we certainly have the  
12 advantage of employers really needing jobs filled  
13 and being able to articulate to them how valuable  
14 the disability population is in filling those  
15 positions.

16 But even before this very low  
17 unemployment rate, the state of Vermont embarked on  
18 an effort to do two different things. One is  
19 something that we have titled and called Creative  
20 Workforce Solutions.

21 So rather than there being this  
22 competition between the Department of Labor and  
23 vocational rehabilitation and the Division for the  
24 Blind and our supported employment programs in  
25 hitting the same employer multiple times to job

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1 create, we coordinated those efforts.

2 And that's something that we can do  
3 because Vermont is a small enough state to make  
4 this work that in each region, there was a  
5 coordinated effort to speak to employers about  
6 supported employment globally.

7 So whether you were talking about  
8 physical disability or intellectual disability or  
9 developmental disability or blindness or visual  
10 impairment, we approached employers as a single  
11 voice for the state of Vermont through a  
12 coordination in Voc Rehab so that they were only  
13 meeting with one person and that person could speak  
14 to all of the different efforts. And then we would  
15 plug people in.

16 So I think that coordinated approach  
17 was really helpful in building the capacity and the  
18 relationships that we have with employers. And I  
19 think that the other piece of it in Vermont is that  
20 from a gubernatorial point of view, administrations  
21 -- and I now have the opportunity to work across  
22 three different administrations, both Republican  
23 and Democratic.

24 And all of the governors and the  
25 administrations have said the same thing, that

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1 Vermont is resource rich when it comes to our  
2 Vermonters. And we recognize that they all have a  
3 contribution to make. And I think that Voc Rehab  
4 and our supported employment entities are really  
5 clear that they have two customers when they're in  
6 a supported employment endeavor.

7 It's the individual who wants to be  
8 employed, but it's also our employers. So we make  
9 sure that we are providing high customer service to  
10 our employers to make sure that they never feel  
11 that they're left or abandoned or not supported and  
12 that they are getting more bang for their buck when  
13 we employ somebody. And I think that that's really  
14 crucial to the philosophy as a whole.

15 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

17 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Mr. Cammarano?  
18 Sorry if I butchered --

19 MR. CAMMARANO: It's okay.

20 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- your name.  
21 Everybody gets it, though. Could you describe to  
22 us -- have you hired any of the people that work  
23 for you in a full-time capacity?

24 MR. CAMMARANO: Not full time.

25 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: I mean, not full

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1 time. I don't mean full time, 40 hours a week. I  
2 mean regular?

3 MR. CAMMARANO: Yes, two of the  
4 students that worked through the program now work  
5 for us --

6 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay.

7 MR. CAMMARANO: -- part time.

8 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And do you --

9 MR. CAMMARANO: But they're on regular  
10 payroll.

11 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Right. And do  
12 you have any plans to obtain some other employees  
13 through this program?

14 MR. CAMMARANO: We would. And again,  
15 working with CCS, we're beginning that process. As  
16 I said, we piloted the program in my hotel probably  
17 because I'm the most open to it. And we wanted to  
18 educate ourselves about what the programs are all  
19 about.

20 So yeah, we would like to expand that  
21 program as we continue to grow as a company and  
22 look for different opportunities. Unemployment is  
23 very low, so everybody that wants to work we have a  
24 place for. So we're working with CCS to definitely  
25 secure some more folks in different locations.

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1                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:   And how do your  
2 non-IDD people, non-disabled people interact with  
3 your two employees?

4                   MR. CAMMARANO:   That was a process.  At  
5 first, it was a little challenging.  But the two  
6 particular employees that we do have just have a  
7 knack for really connecting with people.  And  
8 they've kind of educated us.  We're not people with  
9 disabilities.  We're people with abilities just  
10 like you, just like me.

11                  The one student, every time I say,  
12 what's your next career goal?  He says, I want your  
13 keys because I want your job.  I put them under a  
14 table, but he never takes them.

15                  (Laughter.)

16                  MR. CAMMARANO:   So they have really  
17 helped --

18                  COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:  You give him the  
19 bottle of aspirin.

20                  (Laughter.)

21                  MR. CAMMARANO:   A bottle but not  
22 aspirin.  They have really helped us as a company.  
23 Just right before I came over, one of the young  
24 people was in my office talking to me.  He's  
25 meeting, I guess, with some people here now.  And

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1 our vice president of operations popped his head  
2 in. And he just stood and said to him, come on in.  
3 Sit down. What can I do for you today?

4 So he has a great rapport with  
5 everybody that comes in. All of our students have  
6 been good. We have a couple through South  
7 Burlington High School programs that have come in,  
8 the Voc Rehab through Burlington High School.

9 Again, the initial reaction is not  
10 unfavorable from us because, like, we're going to  
11 have to pick up the slack to the opposite. Just  
12 this week, we're doing a wellness month in our  
13 company. And everybody got a pedometer to track  
14 their steps during the day.

15 And the one young man just came to me  
16 and said, how many do you think I did yesterday? I  
17 said, I don't know. Ten thousand? He goes, nope.  
18 All right, 12,000. No, why don't you go above  
19 15,000? And that was while he was working. So  
20 he's all over the place interacting with employees,  
21 with guests.

22 This particular individual, if you  
23 don't mind me saying, we just nominated him for the  
24 Hilton CEO Light and Warmth Award which is an award  
25 given to 12 people throughout the world who work

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1 for Hiltons. So we just nominated him, and we're  
2 hoping to hear from that in June. There are about  
3 200 people worldwide that are nominated.

4 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: That=s great. Any  
5 questions?

6 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Not right this  
7 second.

8 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Not yet? Debo?

9 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: I wanted to ask  
10 about that -- I think Ms. Masterson was talking  
11 about a rural county that substantially increased  
12 its employment statistic up 6 percent or so. Can  
13 she hear me?

14 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Jennie, did you  
15 hear that?

16 MS. MASTERSON: I heard that somebody  
17 just asked me about the county that substantially  
18 increased its employment rate by 6 percent.

19 COMMISSIONER HUTT: The rural area,  
20 yes.

21 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Yeah. I'm  
22 wondering what was it. What were the circumstances  
23 that allowed that substantial increase over a short  
24 period of time. And in your assessment, is it  
25 replicable?

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1 MS. MASTERSON: Right. One of the  
2 changes was that there are two new businesses that  
3 opened up, that became real friends of supportive  
4 employment, and have hired a number of individuals.  
5 So two business accounts or two employers that are  
6 working closely with that particular program.

7 And another fact is that they are one  
8 of the partnering agencies for post-secondary  
9 education. So it gives them a bit of an advantage  
10 when a young person comes out of two years of  
11 college. They're much more prepared to go into the  
12 workforce and to actually establish a career like  
13 John Cammarano was talking about.

14 So I think those two things, the  
15 addition of new businesses we have, and the Post-  
16 Secondary Ed Initiative. The Post-Secondary Ed  
17 Initiative has really helped us make sure that  
18 after two or sometimes three years of college young  
19 people are preparing and getting ready for their  
20 job long before they graduate. And then there's  
21 the employment program that works very closely with  
22 each and every post-secondary ed organization to  
23 make that happen.

24 MR. SMITH: Thank you. Could I -- this  
25 is James Smith. Could I add one thing to that?

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1 And Jennie, yell at me if I'm putting words in your  
2 mouth.

3 But I think one of things that you and  
4 I have talked about consistently over the years is  
5 that as the supported employment grows, it has to  
6 maintain capacity for job development and program  
7 coordination. And that job development and program  
8 coordination capacity has to grow as the more  
9 people enter supported employment.

10 And if you don't -- because you need --  
11 for all the direct supports, you need people around  
12 there in the community identifying and developing  
13 the jobs. Is that okay, Jennie?

14 MS. MASTERSON: That's right. They  
15 didn't grow, but that is absolutely correct.  
16 That's something that we're supporting overall. I  
17 guess one of the other indicators for that  
18 particular agency would be that it's a very flat  
19 organizational structure.

20 So the employment coordinator is very,  
21 very well supported by the director there in the  
22 same way that Michelle is supported by Beth at  
23 Champlain Community Services. And that makes a big  
24 difference when you see the employment coordinator  
25 who has a direct link to the director.

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1           They're talking about funding needs.  
2           They're talking about how to expand and how to grow  
3           together. And that type of support I do think  
4           makes a difference.

5           COMMISSIONER HUTT: This is Monica, and  
6           I know Beth is trying to get in. But I just want  
7           to add to this because you were asking about  
8           replicable strategies. And I think that one of the  
9           things that Voc Rehab has been able to do is to  
10          identify -- as new industries are opening up, to  
11          identify what their needs are going to be in those  
12          industries and to conduct kind of mass training in  
13          those areas to meet those needs.

14          So again, rather than looking at it  
15          from a supported employer-employee approach,  
16          looking what the business needs are, identifying  
17          what those training needs are going to be, and  
18          getting the workforce in that area, both disabled  
19          and nondisabled, ready to meet that industry need  
20          in a really targeted way.

21          I think that has been a really  
22          successful approach in the state of Vermont that I  
23          do think is replicable -- it's a really hard word  
24          to say, replicable -- nationally.

25          COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Thank you.

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1 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

2 MS. SIGHTLER: This is Beth. And I  
3 appreciate the compliments around supporting  
4 Michelle Paya, but it's really just sort of staying  
5 out of her way --

6 (Laughter.)

7 MS. SIGHTLER: -- Letting her do what  
8 she does which is kind of nearly magical. I wanted  
9 to bring the conversation back to the discussion  
10 around civil rights that you started talking about,  
11 John, because I think it's -- from the Civil Rights  
12 Commission, I think that's -- it's really essential  
13 about the way we do things in Vermont.

14 And I think you started talking about  
15 this a little bit. The idea -- and I don't want to  
16 be too kind of woo-woo Vermont-y. But a really big  
17 part of what we do here in Vermont is it's not just  
18 getting jobs for people because it's hugely  
19 important.

20 But it's those relationships that we  
21 build with employers and the relationships that we  
22 build with coworkers that supports the transition  
23 from the mindset of what contributions within  
24 intellectual disabilities are bringing to the  
25 workforce or to the community. And that's a huge

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1 part of all the agencies in the state and what  
2 they're trying to do is making sure that those  
3 relationships are impactful.

4 And there is -- we are comfortable with  
5 people being uncomfortable with people with IDD.  
6 We understand that it's a transition still to have  
7 people in the workforce that there are a lot of  
8 questions, that there are problems. And we don't  
9 hold the philosophy that everybody can work  
10 anywhere. We're looking to find the right  
11 connections for people.

12 And we also work with employers to make  
13 sure that they're employing somebody who's truly a  
14 contribution in their workforce. So it's not a  
15 token position, that they're really employed. And  
16 that if they're not successful in that position,  
17 that they're terminated. That if they're not the  
18 right match, that we move.

19 So it really is true employment, true  
20 gainful employment that also has this incredible  
21 secondary effect of allowing people to see the full  
22 spectrum of abilities. So it's really -- and  
23 that's -- and I would say that any supported  
24 employment director in the state would be saying  
25 the same thing, probably more articulately.

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1           Just it's the way that we do business  
2 here because it has to have -- we need to elevate  
3 the understanding of people with IDD. And it's a  
4 way we can do it, we think, and it's a little less  
5 formal. It's kind of a trick.

6           MS. PAYA: This is Michelle Paya. I  
7 just want to add one of the things that we say a  
8 lot is special treatment or inclusion. It's not  
9 both. And we really, truly believe in inclusion,  
10 and we want people to learn from mistakes and grow  
11 from opportunities. And that's what we truly  
12 believe.

13           COMMISSIONER HUTT: Yeah, it's rights  
14 and responsibilities.

15           MS. PAYA: Yes, exactly.

16           MS. SIGHTLER: And the responsibility  
17 is as important as the right.

18           MR. CAMMARANO: This is John Cammarano.  
19 It hasn't all been rosy. It hasn't all been easy.  
20 We've had students come work for us where it wasn't  
21 working out. And we treated that situation just  
22 like I would any other employee. We had Ron come  
23 in and some people from the agency come in. We sat  
24 down. We did a review, a plan, how we're going to  
25 move forward and see if this works, switch job

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1 roles, do all those things.

2 So it does happen. But again, it's  
3 treating everybody just like I would any other  
4 employee through CCS. And the support that we get  
5 from CCS has been great with that. It's kind of  
6 reminding me of that. Don't treat them any  
7 differently than you would any other employee. So  
8 it's been great.

9 MS. PAYA: Failure is just as important  
10 as success.

11 MR. CAMMARANO: Yeah.

12 MS. BONGES: Mickey Bonges. Sometimes  
13 it's great too because the client or the student  
14 will learn to advocate for themselves. But they  
15 have support in the background. And it's a team  
16 process for this is how you do it. And if they're  
17 not happy with something on the job or they see  
18 something with a coworker and they want it  
19 addressed, there's a way to do it.

20 MR. SMITH: This is James Smith. This  
21 is an old anecdote from my very early days in New  
22 York. But when I was a job coach, there were some  
23 folks in they call day treatment centers. So they  
24 were only people with disabilities in the day  
25 treatment centers. And so there were lots of

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1 unusual behaviors because it was a segregated  
2 setting.

3 But there were some situations where  
4 once you got a person into the employment setting  
5 and where there was a different social norm, it was  
6 just amazing how folks would -- that those unusual  
7 and sometimes alarming behaviors would really  
8 diminish or even cease because everyone wants to  
9 fit in, in a real job setting.

10 MS. SIGHTLER: This is Beth. I think a  
11 lot of the better behavior --

12 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: You have to say  
13 your name.

14 MS. SIGHTLER: Beth Sightler. A lot of  
15 us are better behaved at work than --

16 (Laughter.)

17 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: I would like to  
18 remind my fellow Commissioners of that.

19 (Laughter.)

20 MS. PAYA: This is Michelle Paya. I  
21 agree too. And what I also found with that is the  
22 acceptability of those behaviors. That people now  
23 are finding more commonality in each other, and  
24 they're more accepting of the differences that we  
25 all hold.

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1                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:       One of the  
2 questions I have is we received testimony during  
3 the course of this project that day services are  
4 like babysitting. And we were at the Howard this  
5 morning, and they were describing the life skills  
6 and the social skill programs and the social events  
7 and things like that.

8                   And I was wondering if you could tell  
9 us that, okay, say a person works 16, 15, 20 hours  
10 a week. Does Champagne -- Champagne, right?

11                   MS. SIGHTLER: Champlain.

12                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Champlain.

13                   MS. SIGHTLER: But champagne sounds  
14 good.

15                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Or Howard. Do  
16 they supplement? Do they help those people, the  
17 other 20, 30 hours a week that they're not on the  
18 job?

19                   MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah. So this is Beth  
20 Sightler. Everyone has individualized services, so  
21 it's sort of a la carte for exactly what their  
22 needs are. So as they come through the process  
23 that Monica was describing, the assessment and the  
24 services, the service package that they receive is  
25 specific to what their needs are.

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1           So whether or not the rest of the time  
2 is filled with CCS is really dependent on what  
3 their individual need is. And so yes, sometimes if  
4 that's what they need to do, get community  
5 supports.

6           I'm interested in hearing more about  
7 the question of glorified babysitting. I'm not  
8 sure where you heard that. Was that something from  
9 Vermont?

10           COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: No, no, no.

11           MS. SIGHTLER: Oh, another state. So I  
12 would love to speak to that. I think there's  
13 community support and supported employment supports  
14 and they're both -- They both serve a very  
15 different purpose. And I think it is important  
16 around community supports and I don't think we're  
17 here to discuss this too much.

18           But community supports can become  
19 glorified babysitting if they're not really  
20 consciously delivered and if the staff that's  
21 providing them aren't training in exactly what  
22 their job is.

23           COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Can you  
24 enlighten us as to -- I mean --

25           MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah.

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1                   COMMISSIONER KLADNEY:    -- an example?  
2           I'm good with examples.

3                   MS. SIGHTLER:    Yeah.    So our direct  
4           support professionals used to be called Community  
5           Inclusion Facilitators which is just, like, a whole  
6           lot of syllables.  But really it's trying to create  
7           -- similar to what I was talking about with  
8           supported employment, create a community that is  
9           invested in the individual and understands their  
10          value.

11                   And so their job would be to be if,  
12          say, you have a person with autism and they're  
13          uncomfortable in public places or they have a hard  
14          time and they feel oversensitive to it.

15                   Maybe working on ordering, becoming  
16          more independent.  Getting to know a barista --  
17          their local barista and ordering their favorite  
18          coffee and learning what's -- developing a person  
19          relationship with them.  That kind of facilitated  
20          integration allows them to build a one-on-one  
21          relationship with somebody.

22                   And we see that with all of our staff.  
23          And that's when it's done really right.  As  
24          Michelle was saying, you're sort of working  
25          yourself out of a job, similar to supported

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1 employment. You want to create the relationship  
2 and then step back.

3 And we are always -- one of the things  
4 about the Vermont system is we have a needs  
5 assessment process that's ongoing every day. And  
6 we're looking at each individual and we're having  
7 meetings about them.

8 And we're trying to assess, do they  
9 need this level of care anymore or has the  
10 community support person been able to successfully  
11 facilitate relationships with the community where  
12 they can step back and they're not needed as much?  
13 And that, for us, is a victory when they're not  
14 needed. So people are sort of working themselves  
15 out of a job as much as possible, and we're  
16 assessing that.

17 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: What support is  
18 there for helping the employees advocate for  
19 promotions and pay increases and the like? You  
20 spoke of career not job which is important.

21 MS. SIGHTLER: That's right.

22 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: And one of the  
23 inherent things in a career is a forward trajectory  
24 and thinking in terms of a forward trajectory. And  
25 while there may be some people that take this on

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1 themselves, the employee or the employer, who out  
2 of fairness in recognizing the commitment is  
3 willing to open those conversations.

4 There may be others who need some  
5 additional context for what the forward trajectory  
6 aspiration should be. And so I'm wondering if you  
7 some of you can speak to how you come at that and  
8 what type support is provided to employees in that  
9 regard.

10 MS. SIGHTLER: Is it okay for me to  
11 take that one? I'd love to speak to that because  
12 that's something that all of the agencies, I think,  
13 are really conscious of. Because we have a low  
14 unemployment rate in the state, we're all competing  
15 really hard with health care, with other industries  
16 to keep our employees.

17 And so I think part of it is  
18 advancement and part of it is supporting people in  
19 what they really want to be, to get from their  
20 employer. So CCS as well as some other agencies  
21 have actually been designated some of the best  
22 places to work in Vermont which is a hard  
23 designation to get. And it requires --

24 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: CCS is --

25 MS. SIGHTLER: Where you are, Champlain

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1 Community Services. Sorry, acronyms. Acronym soup.  
2 So some of the things that we do is, we do really  
3 conscientious onboarding. We do lots of training.  
4 We do individualized training with the individuals  
5 who they're working with.

6 But it's also getting to know each one  
7 of the staff. And again, maybe it's the Vermont  
8 way of doing it. But all of the organizations have  
9 a responsibility to understand who the people they  
10 have working for them are and what's going to be  
11 satisfying for them.

12 For many people, we have direct support  
13 professionals who have been here for 12 to 18  
14 years. And this is their chosen profession. This  
15 is what they want to do.

16 And so in those situations, I feel like  
17 our responsibility is to advocate to make sure they  
18 have good insurance, to make sure they have a  
19 living wage, to make sure that they're getting the  
20 supports that they need to be successful. So  
21 obviously, their value is being rewarded as an  
22 employee.

23 For people who are looking for  
24 advancement who come in and you can see they have  
25 an ambition for a little bit more. Then we have

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1 regular supervision with everybody. I think it's  
2 probably the same for other organizations as well.

3 Getting to know really what their  
4 interests are, and that can be specialized by  
5 looking for unique trainings, if they're interested  
6 in aging, if they're interested in dementia, if  
7 they're interested in education or community  
8 involvement. And if this isn't their field, quite  
9 honestly, trying to support them in progressing to  
10 where they want to be somewhere else. If it's not  
11 the right match, it's not the right match.

12 And we always -- CCS and I'm sure other  
13 organizations as well, always look to hire from  
14 within. As we're developing service coordinators  
15 and senior managers, those people often come from  
16 our direct service workforce.

17 MS. PAYA: I'd like to add on.  
18 Michelle Paya. As far as the folks we support,  
19 we're constantly talking. We have a relationship  
20 with every individual that we work with. But we  
21 create individual service agreements. Those are  
22 done every two years, and they're overseen every  
23 month, every quarter, every year.

24 We do monthly job site visits to talk  
25 to the employer to find out where they're at.

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1 Where do they need somebody? What type of skills  
2 does a person need? And we look at the individual  
3 that's out there working for them or could be  
4 future working for them. And how do we get them  
5 those skills to become promotable and whatnot?

6 We do that through the job site visits.  
7 We do that through monthly team meetings, monthly  
8 home visits where we can get to know the person in  
9 the big picture of understanding their full life  
10 experiences and how we can help that trajectory  
11 wherever they're planning it.

12 So it's very, very goal based. Where  
13 do you want to be now? Where do you want to be  
14 next year? And we really try to find that path for  
15 them and give them the support to get there. And  
16 our post-secondary partnerships have been a really  
17 great addition to that because that is helping us  
18 build those skills and a normal means of education.

19 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So these  
20 individual service agreements, does that include  
21 the needs assessment and all that in response to  
22 that? So that if someone needed to learn how to  
23 cook or if someone needed to learn how to shop  
24 healthy or something like that or get out and  
25 socialize and go bowling or something like that?

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1 MS. PAYA: It's Michelle Paya again.  
2 It meets all of those individual living skills, the  
3 advocacy skills, career exploration, community  
4 connections, all those really facets that bring the  
5 quality of life for an individual.

6 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And Ms. Bonges?

7 MS. BONGES: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: High school.

9 MS. BONGES: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So can you  
11 describe to us how these IDD students progress  
12 through the school system so that you can  
13 transition? You have spoken about -- I think you  
14 spoke about they're getting out of school and  
15 they're anxious for a job. They expect a job. How  
16 do you get there? I mean, is there a process that  
17 the state uses that's standard or is it individual  
18 to each school district?

19 Because there's thousands of school  
20 districts around the country. I mean, there's  
21 probably as many counties -- the school districts  
22 here as there are counties.

23 MS. BONGES: Well, the goal of our  
24 program and I think many schools in Vermont have  
25 this. And this is Mickey Bonges. Sorry, I'm not

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1 good at this stuff. So anyway, our goal is to have  
2 a third to at least a half of the students that we  
3 work with have employer paid jobs when they leave.

4 That said, depending on their needs and  
5 their need of support, we transition with the adult  
6 service projects. Before they graduate, a lot of  
7 times, if they still need job support, then we'll  
8 have someone from CCS or Project HIRE to support  
9 them on the job before so it's a smooth transition.

10 So ideally, they're already hired by  
11 the time that CCS comes on board or Project HIRE.  
12 And this is part of an academic -- they're paid for  
13 our program. We do -- a lot of them are paid,  
14 like, especially juniors and seniors. We look for  
15 employer paid jobs while they're still in school.  
16 And it's also they get academic credit for working  
17 and learning work skills too.

18 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So I understand  
19 that. I think -- well, my question, I think, is,  
20 how do you start with a young person, 14 I think  
21 the age is, 13, 14, and progress through high  
22 school to get them to the point where a third to  
23 half of them have jobs at the time they graduate?  
24 How does it work physically at the school?

25 MS. BONGES: We have a staff of four.

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1 There are two of us who coordinate the program, and  
2 we have to job coaches. We work very closely.  
3 We're all -- the two coordinators, we're special  
4 educators and we work with the IEP team and we work  
5 with parents. And we work with the adult service  
6 agency.

7 They come on board when the student is  
8 16, and we start having the conversations. By the  
9 time they're juniors, they probably -- either  
10 they've stayed in a job or they've had three or  
11 four jobs depending on what their interests are.

12 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So they've  
13 interned in positions? I mean, they've actually  
14 gone out --

15 MS. BONGES: Oh, yes, yeah, yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- and done  
17 work?

18 MS. BONGES: This is our job site,  
19 unless I took the names off. I mean, this --

20 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: This is what I'm  
21 asking.

22 MS. BONGES: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Is B-  
24 specifically how it works. You said we have job  
25 coaches.

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1 MS. BONGES: It's considered a -- we  
2 consider it a class.

3 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Don't talk over  
4 each other.

5 MS. BONGES: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So it's a class.  
7 You have job coaches. You must have people who are  
8 job developers, or who does that?

9 MS. BONGES: The coordinators do. We  
10 do.

11 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay. And then  
12 the students will intern, like, six weeks or four  
13 weeks? Or will they just go to the job and if they  
14 like it, stay? I mean, I'm trying to get a picture  
15 here.

16 MS. BONGES: That's exactly it. It's  
17 that individualized. Some students -- and it's  
18 just as important that they know that they do not  
19 want to work in this field. So many -- we have so  
20 many -- they seemed to like pet groomers.  
21 Everybody wanted to be a pet groomer. Now it's  
22 something else. But they try it out. We see. I  
23 mean, if it's not working for them, we don't make  
24 them stay in that job.

25 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So at least a

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1 third to a half that have jobs at the time they  
2 graduate.

3 MS. BONGES: Employer paid jobs, yes.

4 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Employer paid  
5 job by the time they graduate.

6 MS. BONGES: Yes, it was transitioning.

7 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Do they  
8 necessarily go to Champlain Services or to Howard  
9 or somebody like that? Or --

10 MS. BONGES: No.

11 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- can they just  
12 continue on in the position without any supports?

13 MS. BONGES: Some do, yes. Absolutely.

14 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And do you  
15 support them? Say they get out of school when  
16 they're 18 --

17 MS. BONGES: No, we can't.

18 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: As soon as they  
19 leave school --

20 MS. BONGES: They're done with us, yes.

21 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- you can't  
22 support them?

23 (Simultaneous speaking.)

24 COMMISSIONER HUTT: This is Monica  
25 Hutt. But again, that might be where the

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1 transition to Voc. Rehab.. happens. So if they're  
2 not coming into developmental services and working  
3 through Project HIRE or CCS, they are absolutely  
4 eligible for services through vocation  
5 rehabilitation.

6 And that's why it's so important that  
7 Voc. Rehab.. is part of that transition. Because  
8 imagine a kid graduating from high school. They're  
9 either going to go completely independent and maybe  
10 have Voc. Rehab. as a backup support for any other  
11 additional barriers to work or continuing career  
12 development. Or they're going to come into  
13 developmental services and receive those more  
14 specialized supports.

15 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Ms. Bonges, I  
16 know you described what happens at your school, and  
17 I appreciate that. Do you know -- I think part of  
18 my question was, is there a statewide approach to  
19 this through the State Department of Education? Or  
20 is it developed in each school district separately?  
21 Do you have any idea? If you don't, that's fine.

22 MS. BONGES: This is Mickey Bonges.  
23 It's pretty much per the school district. Everyone  
24 has -- most people have a transition program. They  
25 look different. Just they're not all the same. It

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1 just depends on what the needs of the district are  
2 and the administration and what they believe in.

3 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So your district  
4 would Essex High School --

5 MS. BONGES: Essex, yes.

6 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- would be  
7 similar to another high school in your district  
8 here in Burlington?

9 MS. BONGES: Similar.

10 MR. SMITH: This -- we have one sort of  
11 statewide mechanism around transition. This is  
12 James Smith from Voc. Rehab. We have core  
13 transition teams in each of the 12 districts in the  
14 state. And that's the place where VR, the  
15 populated or school staff, the designated agencies  
16 come together and plan and coordinate.

17 And it's locally driven, and it seems  
18 to be quite effective in terms of making sure  
19 students aren't missed. And that if we, VR, know  
20 about a student over here and Beth isn't aware of  
21 them, there's an opportunity to --

22 (Simultaneous speaking.)

23 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So it would be  
24 your opinion then that it's better to leave it as a  
25 local development?

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1 MR. SMITH: Oh, it's --

2 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Or do you have  
3 guidelines?

4 MR. SMITH: -- strongly supported by  
5 the state agency education. And there's a very  
6 small amount of funding. But it's more like  
7 providing the framework, but it's locally driven.

8 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So are there  
9 guidelines given by the state or ideas or are there  
10 conferences? Do you work together?

11 PARTICIPANT: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: I mean, I'm just  
13 trying to --

14 MR. SMITH: Sure, sure.

15 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: I mean, if you  
16 live in a small county and you have one person in  
17 charge of the program, they need -- and you have  
18 one VR person that travels through the county or  
19 something like that, they need some guidance,  
20 right?

21 MR. SMITH: Yeah. So the Voc. Rehab..  
22 transition counselors tend to be the organizing  
23 agents and they're supported by our transition  
24 director. And then we also have a large annual  
25 conference where I think it was around 300 to

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1 almost 400 people of schools, employers, VR  
2 designated agencies. It was everyone in the same  
3 room.

4 COMMISSIONER HUTT: This is Monica  
5 Hutt. So there's guidance for how those core  
6 transition teams run. They are uniquely community  
7 flavored, but there is a typical and traditional  
8 structure that I think is replicated across all of  
9 the core transition teams.

10 I think the other thing that I would  
11 say is that I described a little bit earlier that  
12 there are different hoops for eligibility for  
13 developmental and intellectual disability services  
14 here in the state of Vermont. The first level, of  
15 course, is clinical eligibility.

16 The second level is what we have come  
17 to fondly or not so fondly refer to as funding  
18 priorities. And most of those funding priorities  
19 are because we are triaging a finite amount of  
20 resources. And so we try to identify the most  
21 urgent and emergent needs.

22 Almost all of our funding priorities  
23 are very emergency based, loss of home, loss of  
24 caregiver. The one area that is not emergency  
25 based is continuation of employment. And so I

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1 think that the high schools are very good about  
2 recognizing that a kid is more likely to come into  
3 services in the state of Vermont if they've got  
4 employment and they are at risk of losing that  
5 employment without services.

6 So there's a real prioritization and  
7 incentivizing the idea of employment for kids and  
8 students graduating. And I forgot, that's another  
9 way that we supported this concept statewide.

10 MS. MASTERSON: This is Jennie. I  
11 would just like to add something. We do work  
12 closely with the Agency on Education. We have a  
13 colleague over there, John Spinney, who can pick up  
14 the phone and talk with.

15 A few years ago, we worked with John  
16 closely. He helped -- asked us to help him develop  
17 a graduation matrix for youth in school with  
18 disabilities, asking the IEP team as part of their  
19 transition planning with a graduation guideline and  
20 matrix. And part of that was to assure.

21 It's a checklist that assures that all  
22 of the adult service providers are part of the  
23 team, that all of the different community resources  
24 are at the table well before that person graduates  
25 from high school. We can also call John into

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1 situations where maybe there's opposing views about  
2 whether a student should graduate or not. And he  
3 can come in and provide some application to the  
4 school team as well as to us.

5 And then lastly, Agency of Ed. is  
6 looking to the future over the next few years  
7 implementing new graduation requirements. And one  
8 of the requirements would be that all students have  
9 a truancy based work experience as part of their  
10 graduation requirement.

11 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Thank you. So  
12 I have a little bit of a broader question which  
13 we're trying to draw in the Vermont experience but  
14 thinking about different states as they try and  
15 provide services to the target population.

16 We've spoken to some folks that had  
17 some anxiety about the future of 14(c), and we're  
18 expressing some trepidation about its future. And  
19 almost in every case where there is discussion of  
20 concern about the future of that provision, there  
21 is a focus, a rather urgent focus on what would  
22 happen to folks that are theoretical beneficiaries  
23 of this statutory provision on the other side of  
24 whatever the new world looks like.

25 So this is sort of a hypothetical, but

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1 feeling some churn in the water. And so I want to  
2 know what the Vermont take or experience suggests  
3 about what the world looks like as people reflect  
4 and consider what the future of 14(c) is.

5 MS. PAYA: Is 14(c) the statute that  
6 creates sheltered workshops?

7 COMMISSIONER HUTT: 14(c) is the  
8 subminimum wage.

9 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Subminimum  
10 wage.

11 MS. SIGHTLER: Allows them -- basically  
12 allows them to exist -- continue to exist.

13 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Your  
14 organization was one who went through the  
15 transition. Is that right?

16 MS. SIGHTLER: That's right.

17 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Yeah. So just  
18 to sharpen it a bit. The fear is that -- the sense  
19 is that we're off a cliff without the status quo.  
20 There's no alternative way to do this, or at least  
21 there's no model about how to do it and do it in a  
22 way that still attends to the need because  
23 everybody recognizes that there's a need.

24 And so part of what I'm asking is based  
25 on this state's experience, what insights, if any,

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1 do we have about how you go from one state of  
2 affairs, the status quo, to possible other states  
3 of affairs? Recognizing every state is different,  
4 every individual case of support need is different,  
5 employer needs are different.

6 So I'm not trying to wipe away the  
7 complexities of these questions. But I'm trying to  
8 learn something about some of the concerns that  
9 have been articulated and to see if there's any  
10 lessons to be learned that might need to be  
11 considered in other contexts.

12 MS. SIGHTLER: This is Beth. And there  
13 are people who'll be able to answer this question a  
14 lot better than me. But if the question is or if  
15 the statement is or the hypothesis perhaps is that  
16 there is a need for 14(c), I would say that Vermont  
17 is a great -- provides great evidence that there  
18 isn't. That it is no longer a need to have  
19 subminimum wage.

20 And I'm not sure in your work, in  
21 looking at this, what preserving 14(c) does what it  
22 does for individuals versus what it might do for  
23 businesses. My business is supporting people and  
24 their civil rights and their success in the  
25 community. And at the same time, building a

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1 community -- this is actually a tagline. This is  
2 part of our mission statement. But building a  
3 community where people participate and belong.

4 And we really mean that throughout the  
5 state. So whether or not 14(c) is something that's  
6 beneficial to some states, I'm here to say there's  
7 great success beyond it and that people are served  
8 very well.

9 And that is not to disregard the  
10 complexities of what that transition is or -- I  
11 mean, here at CCS, we still have a memory of what  
12 that transition was like. We still have --  
13 unfortunately, we don't have families who could  
14 come today. But we have family members who were  
15 extremely reluctant.

16 I would say maybe even terrified of  
17 what the world -- how the world would be welcoming  
18 of their person. Whether employers would be able  
19 to support them. Whether there was a community who  
20 cared about understanding somebody's skills and  
21 abilities while also understanding their behaviors  
22 and disabilities.

23 So it's a true reality for the states  
24 who are looking to stop this or to transition away  
25 from using 14(c). But there is a world beyond that

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1 that I think we can -- and many other states can  
2 too. I mean, it's not just Vermont.

3 And I think there are successes in  
4 Vermont that are specific to us and perhaps of our  
5 size. Maybe we're successful in beta. But I think  
6 that there's also evidence of larger states who  
7 have been successful as well.

8 I'm going to stop talking because I  
9 know --

10 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Yeah, I would add  
11 to that a little bit. This is Monica Hutt. I  
12 think that -- so a couple things I would say. I  
13 think it's very akin to the idea of  
14 deinstitutionalization. And as long as you  
15 maintain empty beds, those beds will be filled. So  
16 as long as you maintain a subminimum wage, there is  
17 no incentive to make any change.

18 But I do think of that, and not to  
19 minimize, as Beth said, the experience. But I don't  
20 think it's very different than any kind of a large  
21 change management effort in any organization where  
22 you start at the beginning and you identify the  
23 reason for the need for a change.

24 And so I think there's a philosophical  
25 mining that needs to happen where you create the

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1 desire for change by identifying the reasons and  
2 the need for a change. And then it's a step-by-  
3 step process. And I think that the change  
4 management that you see on a small scale is  
5 applicable to this on a large scale.

6 Again, you start with identifying the  
7 problem. You start with identifying or building  
8 kind of the hearts and minds towards a solution.  
9 And then there's an iterative approach to that  
10 solution. So there does need to be, as in any  
11 change management strategy, some investment along  
12 the way so that you are maintaining parallel  
13 systems for a period of time while disincentivizing  
14 the system that you want to take away and  
15 incentivizing.

16 So additional resources at a middle  
17 point, and then you kind of shift the balance so  
18 that the incentives are towards the system that you  
19 want to see. And you disincentivize what you don't  
20 want to see and move that forward slowly, all along  
21 the way creating opportunity for testimonial and  
22 success, promoting that success, and articulating  
23 where needs are better filled.

24 And if you don't have a supported  
25 workshop, I suspect that in any place where that

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1 occurs right now, you will end up with an industry  
2 that's not getting its needs met. And the  
3 conversation to that industry is, how do we then  
4 meet your needs in a different way? Because we're  
5 no longer going to be doing piecework for you. How  
6 is that going to happen? Well, let me tell you how  
7 that's going to happen, and you start to build.

8 So I think that change management is  
9 really the key. And Vermont didn't know about  
10 change management when we did this. But if you  
11 reflect back on the different pieces, I think you  
12 will see that it really follows that trajectory as  
13 most change does.

14 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: What year did  
15 this start? Give me a time line here.

16 COMMISSIONER HUTT: So it was closed  
17 here in 2002 was when we finally closed the  
18 workshop here. But I think that -- when did we  
19 start closing the Brandon Training School? Because  
20 I think there was a --

21 MS. SIGHTLER: Jennie?

22 COMMISSIONER HUTT: -- parallel.

23 MS. MASTERSON: '92 was when we closed  
24 the training school. But we started closing  
25 sheltered workshops in Vermont in 1979. I was a

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1 sheltered workshop manager in Middlebury and it  
2 spanned over, like, six month period. And there  
3 was a sheltered workshop event and -- one sheltered  
4 workshop event. In another part of the state, the  
5 state worked with them. That agency had closed  
6 down over a two-year period but it only took them  
7 about a year.

8 At Champlain Community Services, there  
9 was a commuter plan closed down. But Champlain  
10 Community was able to do it in two years. And to  
11 your question about -- that Monica hit upon about  
12 making change or a strategic plan around how to  
13 move through this process.

14 One of the first things that many  
15 workshops have done is to close the front door. So  
16 you stop bringing people in, especially stop  
17 allowing young people coming out of high school and  
18 young adults come into the workshop. And what that  
19 requires is an alternative service provision for  
20 those individuals. So some form of excellent  
21 employment services you develop for the young  
22 people coming in.

23 And then you have in place the model by  
24 which you can start to look at the cohort that  
25 remains in the workshop to make some decisions

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1 around how we'd like to kind of move through that  
2 cohort.

3 In Vermont, it was painful for an  
4 employer certainly that were involved in our  
5 sheltered workshops because the subcontract work  
6 just became less and less and less to the point  
7 where it become our sheltered workshops became  
8 obsolete. And we're not really -- they never made  
9 a profit. They were actually funded in part by  
10 state government.

11 Another idea is take a look at the  
12 resources that are attached to any sheltered  
13 workshop. I know some of the workshops in Illinois  
14 have a lot of resources attached to them, big  
15 expensive vehicles, beautiful buildings, a lot of  
16 overhead.

17 And take a look at how can recycle some  
18 of those funds into a placement program right out  
19 of the sheltered workshop and get people moving  
20 into that program out. I don't know if I'm  
21 touching upon some of the things that you were  
22 asking about.

23 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: No, you're not.

24 MS. MASTERSON: There are concrete ways

25 --

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1                   COMMISSIONER    HERIOT:           What    I'm  
2                   interested in, maybe I'm confused here.    But you're  
3                   talking about sheltered workshops, and I'm talking  
4                   about 14(c).    They're no coextensive, are they?  
5                   You can have nonclosed workshops but nevertheless a  
6                   14(c).    That's what I want to know about is 14(c),  
7                   not closed workshops.

8                   MS. PAYA:    So I can talk, and I hope  
9                   I'm going to answer your question.    So I'm looking  
10                  at it on the business standpoint as 14(c) is  
11                  allowing businesses to pay a subminimum wage to get  
12                  a job done.

13                  And so you're asking businesses now to  
14                  pay the minimum state wage or a wage competitive to  
15                  those doing the position.    And that, to me, is  
16                  education to the business community is helping them  
17                  understand that you can have a process.    And what  
18                  your main mission is, is to get to the end product,  
19                  to have this product made.

20                  And so to have the support of agencies  
21                  like CCS and Voc. Rehab., to be able to go in and  
22                  help a person build those efficiencies within the  
23                  employer expectations.    The employer wants bottom  
24                  line and efficiencies.    They need to get product or  
25                  services out the door.    So our job is, how do we

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1 find ways to help that person meet those  
2 expectations and those efficiencies?

3 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Can you tell me  
4 when 14(c) was phased out in Vermont? That's what  
5 I want to know.

6 MS. PAYA: Jennie, can you -- do you  
7 know when 14(c) was phased out, the year?

8 MS. MASTERSON: Yes, we phased it out  
9 in 2002.

10 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Thank you. And  
11 was it phased out all in one blow, or was that a  
12 slow phase out?

13 MS. MASTERSON: We started Theresa Wynn  
14 (phonetic) was our director at the time in 2000 for  
15 our System of Care plan. Put the word out that we  
16 would be phasing out the last workshop of the state  
17 as well as the enclaves. And by 2004, they were  
18 all gone. And the 14(c) was only held by one  
19 agency towards the end. That was Washington  
20 Counsel Mental Health that had 14(c). And they  
21 gave up that certificate as soon as -- at the end  
22 of phasing out three of the work enclaves in three  
23 different industries.

24 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Okay. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: So one more on

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1 this topic. I think the central argument of those  
2 that had concern about a 14(c) phase out, maybe  
3 there are three. One is that it will affect demand  
4 for people with a range of disabilities. That the  
5 cost of employing people with a range of  
6 disabilities will become too high. The net result  
7 being that there will be fewer opportunities. And  
8 we already have not enough opportunities for people  
9 in that circumstance.

10 There's a related concern about what  
11 the consequences of that scarcity will be because  
12 the jobs are important as a financial matter. But  
13 we have come to understand that like every job,  
14 there are things beyond the compensation.

15 There are benefits of having meaningful  
16 work, being able to leave the house, independence,  
17 relationships, all the things that are different  
18 than just babysitting or whatever else may be the  
19 alternative.

20 And then I guess there are -- well, let  
21 me stop with two. Two is enough.

22 MS. PAYA: Yeah. And it's a fine  
23 balance. This is Michelle Paya. It's that fine  
24 balance. And as Monica said earlier is our clients  
25 are the folks we support and also the business

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1 community and helping teach that business community  
2 the value of diversity and also teaching our folks  
3 the power of skills and learning a job and doing a  
4 job.

5 It's a really complex process. We see  
6 that as minimum wage increases. It's scary because  
7 businesses are looking for bottom lines. They need  
8 to make sure they're making -- they're in the black  
9 and they're making profit. But our jobs are to  
10 educate them and how important it is to have  
11 neurodiversity within an organization and that  
12 everybody can do the job.

13 Everybody can learn. It's the teaching  
14 that has to be different. And our job is to figure  
15 out what that teaching tool is to help the  
16 businesses see the efficiencies in the folks we  
17 support.

18 I don't know if that answered that. I  
19 don't know if it was helpful. And utilizing our  
20 resource within Think College, Global Campus, and  
21 the business industries to help teach that as well.

22 COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Okay. As you  
23 get in, I'll add back in my third piece which I  
24 think bridges perhaps some distance between Gail's  
25 comment -- Commissioner Heriot's comment and mine

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1 which is just the concern of change management.

2 Like, if there is a phase out, how do  
3 you get from one state of affairs to the next state  
4 of affairs in a way that's managing the difference?  
5 And not having the panic of families, that we're  
6 going to go from having some mode, some measure of  
7 success to the unknown which is terrifying.

8 MR. SMITH: Sure. So I want to  
9 actually respond to your point around that it will  
10 be too expensive to employ people with mental  
11 disabilities or other disabilities for that matter  
12 in sheltered workshops. And that the problem I  
13 have with that argument is there's an inherent  
14 conflict of interest.

15 If you operate a sheltered workshop  
16 where you have a business customer who is coming to  
17 you saying, I want this much product done and then  
18 you have the consumers you're serving. So for us,  
19 there's no conflict of interest. We're trying to  
20 support the consumer to get a job, and we're trying  
21 to support the employer, make a good match. But we  
22 don't have any financial interest in the outcome.

23 But if you're running a sheltered  
24 workshop, you have financial interest in paying as  
25 little as possible to your workers and getting the

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1 most product out there.

2 So you have no incentive to take, oh,  
3 Joe's been working the sheltered workshop for  
4 years. He doesn't have a job. Maybe he could get  
5 a job in the community. There's no incentive for  
6 you to do that. And so until we take that  
7 fundamental -- the option off the table, that will  
8 never go away.

9 So the second piece, a massive change  
10 like this, you're going to have -- if I was a  
11 parent and my son or daughter had been in my  
12 workshop for 20 years, I would be extremely  
13 anxious. So you have to plan for that. It has to  
14 be a well thought out process.

15 And to be fair, our sheltered workshops  
16 were small compared to what you're talking about.  
17 And so -- but I still think the same -- the process  
18 is the same. It's just the scale and maybe over a  
19 much longer time window.

20 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Well, how did it  
21 occur at Champlain Services? Because you were the  
22 last workshop that closed. Ms. Masterson said you  
23 tried a one-year plan but it took two. I think  
24 that's what she said. And I think what  
25 Commissioner Adegbile is asking and Commissioner

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1 Heriot is how -- I mean, you were here, right? And  
2 Ms. Masterson was here. I don't know if anybody  
3 else was here. But how -- well, okay.

4 MS. SIGHTLER: I wasn't here--here. But  
5 I was --

6 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: How --

7 MS. SIGHTLER: -- in the system.

8 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- did you do it  
9 step by step. Not to expect anybody else to do it  
10 step by step. But, like, you have parents. You  
11 have relatives who are, I think, my own feeling is  
12 they're the drivers. They want to protect their  
13 people. So how did it -- how was it implemented?  
14 Not you have to do this or you have to do -- how  
15 did you implement it?

16 MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah. This is Beth  
17 Sightler. So Jennie is going to be able to speak  
18 to this more articulately. But what I'll say is  
19 there were families who were, I would say, the most  
20 upset, the most frustrated, angry, scared families  
21 are the ones who ultimately became the strongest  
22 advocates for -- in support of community-based  
23 supported employments.

24 Families who originally said, my adult  
25 child won't be safe in the community, were able to

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1 see the transition of their adult child and see  
2 that they became more independent, that they became  
3 more communicative, that their wellness was  
4 improved, that the community was embracing them  
5 because they'd been given an opportunity.

6 And it is a leap of faith. It is not  
7 entirely an easy process. And I don't know exactly  
8 what happened here at CCS. At that time, I wasn't  
9 here. I was in the system. But my understanding  
10 was that the relationships with the state and with  
11 Voc. Rehab., there was no longer an option to use  
12 to have a sheltered workshop.

13 So once that option was eliminated, it  
14 was frankly easier for us to say, this is changing.  
15 This is happening. We are not going to get any  
16 more funding from the state for this. It's a  
17 pretty powerfully persuasive argument for, well, we  
18 need to figure this out.

19 And I think that's something that  
20 Vermont did really well. They said, this is just  
21 not an option anymore. We believe in community-  
22 based supports, and that's the direction we're  
23 going. And so you need to figure out how to do it  
24 and at a pace that's slow enough to allow people to  
25 have the employment.

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1                   COMMISSIONER HUTT: Right. And I would  
2 just add -- this is Monica. So I actually was a  
3 case manager at the time, and one of the women I  
4 was a case manager for was working here at CCS,  
5 Logic Projects. So I have lots of experience with  
6 that and with individual and that family.

7                   And I think maybe the piece that we  
8 didn't articulate because it's really obvious to us  
9 and we aren't seeing it so that you all are getting  
10 the trajectory is that we didn't close the  
11 sheltered workshops and that everybody that was  
12 working in the sheltered workshop went to work in  
13 the community. That would be an impossibility.

14                   So I think that the fear that you just  
15 spoke to, Commissioner, is about families. But  
16 what's going to happen on a day-to-day basis? I'm  
17 not home. I can't have Jane at home. And if she's  
18 not at the sheltered workshop, what is she doing?

19                   So that's where the community-based  
20 supports that Beth originally spoke to came into  
21 play. We started to build consciously really  
22 active community systems for individuals, community  
23 connections. So sometimes those were they started  
24 as a little bit more congregate. They moved to  
25 become more individual by person so that we were

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1 bringing people into community.

2 Their days were still filled. Their  
3 time was filled. And that's what I talked about  
4 when I said there is this shift in investment.  
5 You're no longer funding this, but you're funding  
6 this. And this might cost a little bit more money  
7 for a period of time until you have to make that  
8 investment.

9 But people's hours were still filled.  
10 They were not just left abandoned because there  
11 wasn't some minimum wage to keep them busy at an  
12 employment somewhere. So those community-based  
13 supports were not only about building community but  
14 about building people's skills so that they became  
15 job ready to enter competitive employment in a  
16 different way.

17 So that's the process in the middle  
18 that I think we didn't do a good job of explaining  
19 to you.

20 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: So how --

21 MS. MASTERSON: This is Jennie  
22 Masterson. Just to add what Monica is saying. At  
23 the time, somebody referenced the close partnership  
24 between the funder which was the state of Vermont  
25 and the sheltered workshop.

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1           And every month, there was a large  
2 meeting where the director of the funding mechanism  
3 of adult services and the business office that was  
4 making the money flow between the agency and the  
5 state met with Champlain Community Services.

6           And on a case-by-case basis, they went  
7 one by one through every single individual working  
8 at the workshop and give an assessment of what they  
9 would need for new services, what they would need  
10 without doing a formal assessment with the  
11 individual and family.

12           They were doing more of a -- kind of a  
13 business assessment of what would it take to make  
14 sure that each person had a soft landing. I think  
15 about 40 to 50 individuals did go into employment.  
16 And some of those individuals even got new homes  
17 and community support in addition. And then others  
18 decided that they were going to retire or arrange  
19 other services.

20           Many of the parents were elderly. And  
21 so some of the residential services were very  
22 important to also configure and development at that  
23 time. The State of Vermont did include new funding  
24 and Voc. Rehab. added was funding. So each  
25 individual had a new budget that was attached to

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1           them that translated to what the new service  
2           practices must look like.

3                       So that really was a very tight and  
4           very professional process. And then the overlay to  
5           that as Beth had mentioned was this terrified fear  
6           from the families. What's going to happen? It  
7           really boiled down to, are they going to be safe in  
8           the community? This has been a very safe place for  
9           people to be.

10                      And that was addressed through -- the  
11           employment manager at the time had some clinical  
12           background. He's very good at pulling in families,  
13           bringing people together for once a week for pizza  
14           and really taking a very human approach with those  
15           individuals to really ask each and every one, what  
16           are your real fears?

17                      What can we do to assure you that your  
18           fears are not going to be reality? What can we do  
19           make sure that each person is at the highest level  
20           of personal safety as possible? So it was the  
21           combination of a very intentional business approach  
22           in terms of the funding as well as the human  
23           approach on a case-by-case basis.

24                      COMMISSIONER HERIOT: So can I ask --

25                      COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Before you go

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1 on, Commissioner Heriot had another question.

2 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: How did the Great  
3 Recession affect what you're doing here? Were  
4 there fewer jobs in 2009? Did community services  
5 of another type pick up the slack? How did that  
6 period where we had high unemployment affect people  
7 here?

8 COMMISSIONER HUTT: This is Monica.  
9 That's a great question and I'm trying to think  
10 where I was then. I mean, I think it became harder  
11 obviously to find those competitive employments.  
12 But again, the individual needs assessments for  
13 people were built on what their needs were. And so  
14 if somebody wasn't working, then there were  
15 community supports that took that place. There was  
16 sort of an ebb and flow.

17 Oftentimes right now in Vermont, once  
18 you begin working competitively, you might lose  
19 some of your community support hours. Because as a  
20 state, we had recognized that with finite  
21 resources, we can support one or the other but not  
22 necessarily both. So there's a fluidity between  
23 that

24 The focus and the hope is that people  
25 are going to be using competitive employment and be

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1 employed because that really does create more  
2 connection, better physical, mental, emotional  
3 health. But if that's not an option and those  
4 community supports are the backstop to that.

5 Some people have a little bit of both,  
6 but there is oftentimes the expectation that you're  
7 going to shift from one to the other and not have  
8 both because we cannot sustain both for everybody.

9 The other thing I wanted to say really  
10 quickly is the thing about the subminimum wage to  
11 me, that I never could quite get past is that it is  
12 a forever federal subsidy, right? Because somebody  
13 on subminimum wage is never going to come off  
14 benefits.

15 They are never, ever going to not be in  
16 need of kind of a full package of federal benefits,  
17 whether that's rental subsidy to food stamps. I  
18 mean, you can't get off of those benefits at  
19 subminimum wage. And so I think part of the  
20 conversation is Vermont

21 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: You can change  
22 jobs, can't you? If somebody offers you a job at  
23 more than minimum wage?

24 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Absolutely. But  
25 it's a guarantee if you stay at subminimum wage

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1 that you're going to need federal benefits.  
2 There's no way around that. They're not going to  
3 make enough to live at subminimum wage.

4 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: If you live with  
5 the parents, I mean, there are all sorts of things  
6 here.

7 COMMISSIONER HUTT: If you want to stay  
8 with your parents. But if you ever want to be  
9 independent, that wouldn't be an option for you.  
10 So I think if you're really -- if we're focused on  
11 mainstreaming and actually maintaining that  
12 commitment to people into the future, then they  
13 have to have a trajectory that allows them to be  
14 independent outside of their family homes and  
15 living independently, existing on their own, making  
16 their own decisions.

17 I mean, that's sort of the problem.  
18 That's what we set up with mainstreaming to not  
19 continue that to me is a huge violation of  
20 somebody's rights and of the promises that we make  
21 to people when we say everybody is the same. We're  
22 going to do this together.

23 To not continue that I think is a real  
24 travesty to be honest with you. And I think that's  
25 why I get to pushing about that subminimum wage

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1 because I just feel like it's a disincentive to  
2 independence. It's a disincentive to inclusion.  
3 It's a disincentive to your own value as a human  
4 being basically.

5 MS. SIGHTLER: This is Beth. And  
6 there's also just a contribution. I mean, there's  
7 some tremendous savings around Social Security that  
8 happens from people contributing, paying taxes and  
9 --

10 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Right.

11 MS. SIGHTLER: -- and then as a result,  
12 not receiving as much Social Security.

13 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Yeah. I mean, I  
14 think one of our statistics. This is Monica again.  
15 In the state of Vermont, it's four or five million  
16 dollars in tax contribution. Isn't that right,  
17 Jennie? Individual disabilities?

18 MS. MASTERSON: This past fiscal year,  
19 two million in projected Social Security savings.  
20 And they pay 763,000 dollars in taxes for those  
21 individuals that we support in jobs.

22 COMMISSIONER HUTT: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Would you like  
24 to say something?

25 MS. BONGES: I would like to say

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1 something. This is Micky Bonges. And coming from  
2 the other end of the spectrum where I'm working  
3 with kids that are 14, 15, 16 year olds for the  
4 first time that they've ever worked. And some of  
5 the kids come from poverty. And we work with quite  
6 a few kids that come from poverty.

7 And they get that because our  
8 philosophy for our school district is we pay  
9 minimum wage. If minimum wage goes up, we pay  
10 minimum wage. That's what we do. This is what it  
11 feels like to work an hour. This is 10.96. This  
12 is what you get when you work an hour.

13 It's so important. And it changes  
14 their lives. This is what it feels like. They buy  
15 into it. I mean, money has power. And you're  
16 getting the same as your brother gets at his job at  
17 Dominos or whatever. This is it. And getting  
18 school credit for it, and it's so important. And  
19 they're not less than anybody else. They should be  
20 -- I'm sorry.

21 MS. PAYA: So this is Michelle Paya.  
22 At CCS, within the 81 percent of individuals  
23 working within our programs, 51 percent make higher  
24 than the state's minimum wage. That is our value  
25 to make sure that people are in competitive paid

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1 employment.

2 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay, everyone.

3 MS. MASTERSON: This is Jennie. Our  
4 average pay rate for this past year was \$11.20.  
5 But we had many people working at a range between  
6 \$14.29 up to \$20.75 an hour.

7 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay, everyone.  
8 Thank you very much. I am sorry that Ms. Fullem  
9 couldn't make it here today. She's the parent of -  
10 -

11 COMMISSIONER HERIOT: What happened?

12 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- one of the  
13 clients. I don't know what happened, but she --

14 MR. DAGUE: She was ill and unable to  
15 make it.

16 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay. And --

17 MR. DAGUE: I can share a YouTube video  
18 that she did that might be helpful.

19 MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Yeah. If you  
21 can send it to us, that would be great.

22 MR. DAGUE: I'll do that.

23 **II. ADJOURN MEETING**

24 COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Anyways, this  
25 concludes the business of our subcommittee meeting

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1 today. If there's nothing further, I'll adjourn  
2 the meeting at 2:49 Eastern Time. Thank you.  
3 Thank you very much.

4 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
5 went off the record at 2:49 p.m.)  
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