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
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 MASTERS, 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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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 Adegbile, Commissioner Gail Heriot, and Commission Chair Catherine Lhamon. In addition to me, Commissioners Adegbile and Heriot are present. Chair Lhamon will not join us today.
Based on that a quorum of the subcommittee is present. Is the court reporter present?

COURT REPORTER: Yes.

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

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

The Commission is here today as part of our project on the 14(c) program and the payment of subminimum wages to people with disabilities. We
held a briefing on November 15th, 2019 where we
heard from a range of national experts on the
topic. Materials from this briefing and video of
the testimony and questions are available on the

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

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

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

I. SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

OPENING STATEMENTS BY ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure. Thank you.

So my name is Monica Hutt. I'm the Commissioner of
the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and
Independent Living here in the state of Vermont. That department is part of the Agency of Human Services and under the auspices of the Department which we, for shorthand, will just call DAIL. That's the acronym that we use.

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLASNEY: Mr. Dague? Oh, you can't. Mr. Smith?
MR. SMITH: Sure. So my name is James Smith. I'm the policy manager for the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation. As Monica said, we are part of DAIL, and we are collocated with the District for Developmental Services.

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

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

And I think I'll leave it at that.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Beth?

MS. SIGHTLER: So I'm Elizabeth Sightler. I'm the Executive Director here at
Champlain Community Services. We're one of the 16 provider agencies in the state. So there are 10 designated agencies and --no, I'm sorry -- 11 designated agencies and 5 specialized service agencies.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: That was Michelle Paya?

MS. SIGHTLER: Paya, yeah. So support employment for us throughout the state is you were
asking about transition from high school. And for us and I think for a lot of agencies, that continuum is really essential, making sure that while there's transition planning happening in schools that it's a continuum and not necessarily just for students who are going to come into IDD services here in the agencies. But to make sure they're transitioning into support employment just upon graduation.

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

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

Just sort of from my perspective, having been in this field for 23 years now, I see a big transition, no pun intended, between students who are graduating now and when I first started. Now they're really expecting to have jobs. Now
they anticipate that they will be working. There's a whole different psychology about where they belong in the workplace.

So I think I'll stop there.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: That was 85 percent?

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

MS. MASTERS: Forty-nine percent.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Mr. Cammarano?

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

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

We've been doing that, I guess, about almost three years now. Had several students. I
have currently two students who are out of high 

school and are working for us at salary. And we 

have a student from South Burlington High School.

We've done some work with Voc Rehab 

through Burlington High School as well bringing 

groups of students into the hotel to do various 

things, give them an idea of what the hotel 

business is about, all the different departments, 

all the different options that they have and then 

let them pick.

We have Hosan Coh (phonetic) and Ashley 

Koda (phonetic) right now working for us. And 

eye've both done everything in the hotel in their 

jobs and have been very successful. And we want to 

continue to grow to other facilities in the area, 

so --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you.

Mickey Bonges?

MS. BONGES: Yes, I'm an employment 

transition specialist at Essex High School, and we 

were part of the special ed department. And last 

year, I think we placed 65 students, mostly within 

the community in jobs.

We pay them a stipend which is minimum 

wage per hour. And we work very closely with Voc
Rehab. We have the youth counselors come into our schools. We meet with them regularly. We make sure that the kids are on their radar.

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

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

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

So that's about it.

COMMISSIONER KLADENY: Ms. Paya?

MS. PAYA: Yes, hi. My name is
Michelle Paya, and I am the director of our education employment services here at Champlain Community Services. So my role is really to oversee all of our programs within that model of education and employment.

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

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

So really to build on those financial stabilities and their social capital and their quality of life. So we start that with a bridging program which is a collaboration of five area school systems. And it's building those independent, well rounded skills so when individuals are ready to take on that leap of
employment after school, they have the skills behind them to really propel them.

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

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

MS. PAYA: Yes.

MS. SIGHTLER: Beth Sightler, Executive Director.

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

We are currently looking through our bridging program. We're looking at that whole career model. And within folks with disabilities, you have typical jobs that most folks with disabilities tend to gravitate towards. And we want out of that. We want out of that box of
people only can work in grocery stores or can only work in janitorial means.

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

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

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

So we're really proud of that in Vermont that we are looking at that long-term career. And that's where people stay in careers.
People stay and work when they're finding their best selves.

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

MS. MASTERSON: Yes, hello.

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

MS. MASTERSON: Can you hear me?

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

MS. MASTERSON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- people on the phone.

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

I also work with post-secondary ed. So
I've worked with Bryan over the years to convert the college federal grant from a federal grant into a model that adheres the Medicaid waiver in home and community-based service funding for individuals to pay their fees to go to a college.

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

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

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

So I'm involved in those three teams, and my job is to really just try to help with
systems, help with the processors, help with quality improvement, help with funding. Anything that it takes really to enable the people in the field doing the work to be as successful as possible.

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

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

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

So I guess I'll stop there.
COMMISSIONER HUTT: May I clarify something?

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: Yes?

COMMISSIONER HUTT: I just want to clarify one thing.

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: Go right ahead. This is Ms. Hutt, Monica Hutt.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: And could they be working?

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

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: Thank you --

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: -- very much.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: One of the questions I have that I can't read because I don't have my glasses on is -- oh, first thing I'd like to ask is about the hospital project, Project SEARCH. We went there and were shown here in
Burlington the Project SEARCH location. And we were under the impression it was only two years old. But that is not correct, is it?

COMMISSIONER HUTT: That's --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Here in Burlington?

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

(Simultaneous speaking.)

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

MS. MASTERSO: -- seventh year now -- sixth year.

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

(Simultaneous speaking.)

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: But that Project
SEARCH worked out of a gymnasium, didn't it?

MS. BONGES: Apparently. Yeah, well --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: A fitness center?

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

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

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

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

MS. PAYA: Can I take that?
COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Sure. You've got to say your name.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. PAYA: For intellectual, yes, we do. We could do a lot of iWatches or other --
think of individuals that may be they're doing a task that can't do multiple tasks at once. We could have an electronic piece that will give a reminder of 15 minutes or every 10 minutes, depending on how long a process could take so they know the progression of the task and they don't have to be reminded by a person. So you could use something like that.

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

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

So for her, what we did, she was in a public place. We did a walkie-talkie system where she had an earpiece and a walkie-talkie on her hip like everybody in the mall does. And then her
staff was mingled into the community or within the area and they sat at the table in the dining hall. And they had the microphone and their walkie-talkie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So for example, there's -- I don't know if Bill Ash is in the room today. I don't think I heard him. But over and along the Connecticut
River, what we call the Upper Valley area of Vermont, very, very rural.

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

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

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

One is that I think that there is -- I don't think there is a philosophy in the state of Vermont that really speaks to the value of...
community and each contributing community member.
So I think that we really pin much of the employment on this idea that we're trying to build across any community a really rich fabric.

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

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

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

So rather than there being this competition between the Department of Labor and vocational rehabilitation and the Division for the Blind and our supported employment programs in hitting the same employer multiple times to job
create, we coordinated those efforts.

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

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

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

And all of the governors and the administrations have said the same thing, that
Vermont is resource rich when it comes to our Vermonters. And we recognize that they all have a contribution to make. And I think that Voc Rehab and our supported employment entities are really clear that they have two customers when they're in a supported employment endeavor.

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Mr. Cammarano?

Sorry if I butchered --

MR. CAMMARANO: It's okay.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- your name.

Everybody gets it, though. Could you describe to us -- have you hired any of the people that work for you in a full-time capacity?

MR. CAMMARANO: Not full time.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: I mean, not full
time. I don't mean full time, 40 hours a week. I mean regular?

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay.

MR. CAMMARANO: -- part time.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And do you --

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

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

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

So yeah, we would like to expand that program as we continue to grow as a company and look for different opportunities. Unemployment is very low, so everybody that wants to work we have a place for. So we're working with CCS to definitely secure some more folks in different locations.
COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And how do your non-IDD people, non-disabled people interact with your two employees?

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

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

(Laughter.)

MR. CAMMARANO: So they have really helped --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: You give him the bottle of aspirin.

(Laughter.)

MR. CAMMARANO: A bottle but not aspirin. They have really helped us as a company. Just right before I came over, one of the young people was in my office talking to me. He's meeting, I guess, with some people here now. And
our vice president of operations popped his head in. And he just stood and said to him, come on in. Sit down. What can I do for you today?

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

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

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

This particular individual, if you don't mind me saying, we just nominated him for the Hilton CEO Light and Warmth Award which is an award given to 12 people throughout the world who work...
for Hiltons. So we just nominated him, and we're
hoping to hear from that in June. There are about
200 people worldwide that are nominated.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: That's great. Any
questions?

COMMISSIONER Hutt: Not right this
second.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: Not yet? Debo?

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

COMMISSIONER Hutt: Jennie, did you
hear that?

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

COMMISSIONER Hutt: The rural area,
yes.

COMMISSIONER Adegbile: Yeah. I'm
wondering what was it. What were the circumstances
that allowed that substantial increase over a short
period of time. And in your assessment, is it
replicable?
MS. MASTERSON: Right. One of the changes was that there are two new businesses that opened up, that became real friends of supportive employment, and have hired a number of individuals. So two business accounts or two employers that are working closely with that particular program.

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

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

MR. SMITH: Thank you. Could I -- this is James Smith. Could I add one thing to that?
And Jennie, yell at me if I'm putting words in your mouth.

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

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

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

So the employment coordinator is very, very well supported by the director there in the same way that Michelle is supported by Beth at Champlain Community Services. And that makes a big difference when you see the employment coordinator who has a direct link to the director.
They're talking about funding needs. They're talking about how to expand and how to grow together. And that type of support I do think makes a difference.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Thank you.
COMMISSIONER HUTT: Sure.

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

(Laughter.)

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

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

But it's those relationships that we build with employers and the relationships that we build with coworkers that supports the transition from the mindset of what contributions within intellectual disabilities are bringing to the workforce or to the community. And that's a huge
part of all the agencies in the state and what they're trying to do is making sure that those relationships are impactful.

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

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

So it really is true employment, true gainful employment that also has this incredible secondary effect of allowing people to see the full spectrum of abilities. So it's really -- and that's -- and I would say that any supported employment director in the state would be saying the same thing, probably more articulately.
Just it's the way that we do business here because it has to have -- we need to elevate the understanding of people with IDD. And it's a way we can do it, we think, and it's a little less formal. It's kind of a trick.

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

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

MS. PAYA: Yes, exactly.

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

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

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

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

MR. CAMMARANO: Yeah.

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

MR. SMITH: This is James Smith. This is an old anecdote from my very early days in New York. But when I was a job coach, there were some folks in they call day treatment centers. So they were only people with disabilities in the day treatment centers. And so there were lots of
unusual behaviors because it was a segregated setting.

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: You have to say your name.

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

(Laughter.)

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

(Laughter.)

MS. PAYA: This is Michelle Paya. I agree too. And what I also found with that is the acceptability of those behaviors. That people now are finding more commonality in each other, and they're more accepting of the differences that we all hold.
COMMISSIONER KLASDNEY: One of the questions I have is we received testimony during the course of this project that day services are like babysitting. And we were at the Howard this morning, and they were describing the life skills and the social skill programs and the social events and things like that.

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

MS. SIGHTLER: Champlain.

COMMISSIONER KLASDNEY: Champlain.

MS. SIGHTLER: But champagne sounds good.

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

MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah. So this is Beth Sightler. Everyone has individualized services, so it's sort of a la carte for exactly what their needs are. So as they come through the process that Monica was describing, the assessment and the services, the service package that they receive is specific to what their needs are.
So whether or not the rest of the time is filled with CCS is really dependent on what their individual need is. And so yes, sometimes if that's what they need to do, get community supports.

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: No, no, no.

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

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

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

MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah.
COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: -- an example?
I'm good with examples.

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

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

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

And we see that with all of our staff. And that's when it's done really right. As Michelle was saying, you're sort of working yourself out of a job, similar to supported
employment. You want to create the relationship and then step back.

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

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

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

MS. SIGHTLER: That's right.

COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: And one of the inherent things in a career is a forward trajectory and thinking in terms of a forward trajectory. And while there may be some people that take this on
themselves, the employee or the employer, who out of fairness in recognizing the commitment is willing to open those conversations.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: CCS is --

MS. SIGHTLER: Where you are, Champlain
So some of the things that we do is, we do really
conscious onboarding. We do lots of training.
We do individualized training with the individuals
who they're working with.

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

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

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

For people who are looking for
advancement who come in and you can see they have
an ambition for a little bit more. Then we have
regular supervision with everybody. I think it's probably the same for other organizations as well.

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

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

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

We do monthly job site visits to talk to the employer to find out where they're at.
Where do they need somebody? What type of skills does a person need? And we look at the individual that's out there working for them or could be future working for them. And how do we get them those skills to become promotable and whatnot?

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLASDNEY: So these individual service agreements, does that include the needs assessment and all that in response to that? So that if someone needed to learn how to cook or if someone needed to learn how to shop healthy or something like that or get out and socialize and go bowling or something like that?
MS. PAYA: It's Michelle Paya again. It meets all of those individual living skills, the advocacy skills, career exploration, community connections, all those really facets that bring the quality of life for an individual.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: And Ms. Bonges?

MS. BONGES: Yes.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: High school.

MS. BONGES: Yes.

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

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

MS. BONGES: Well, the goal of our program and I think many schools in Vermont have this. And this is Mickey Bonges. Sorry, I'm not
good at this stuff. So anyway, our goal is to have a third to at least a half of the students that we work with have employer paid jobs when they leave.

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

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

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

MS. BONGES: We have a staff of four.
There are two of us who coordinate the program, and we have to job coaches. We work very closely. We're all -- the two coordinators, we're special educators and we work with the IEP team and we work with parents. And we work with the adult service agency.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: -- and done work?

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: This is what I'm asking.

MS. BONGES: Okay.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Is B- specifically how it works. You said we have job coaches.
MS. BONGES: It's considered a -- we consider it a class.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: Don't talk over each other.

MS. Bonges: Okay.

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

MS. Bonges: The coordinators do. We do.

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

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

COMMISSIONER Kladney: So at least a
third to a half that have jobs at the time they graduate.

MS. BONGES: Employer paid jobs, yes.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: Employer paid job by the time they graduate.

MS. BONGES: Yes, it was transitioning.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: Do they necessarily go to Champlain Services or to Howard or somebody like that? Or --

MS. BONGES: No.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: -- can they just continue on in the position without any supports?


COMMISSIONER Kladney: And do you support them? Say they get out of school when they're 18 --

MS. BONGES: No, we can't.

COMMISSIONER Kladney: As soon as they leave school --

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

COMMISSIONER Kladney: -- you can't support them?

(Simultaneous speaking.)

COMMISSIONER Hutt: This is Monica Hutt. But again, that might be where the
transition to Voc. Rehab. happens. So if they're not coming into developmental services and working through Project HIRE or CCS, they are absolutely eligible for services through vocational rehabilitation.

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

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

MS. BONGES: This is Mickey Bonges. It's pretty much per the school district. Everyone has -- most people have a transition program. They look different. Just they're not all the same. It
just depends on what the needs of the district are and the administration and what they believe in.

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

MS. BONGES: Essex, yes.

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

MS. BONGES: Similar.

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

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

(Simultaneous speaking.)

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: So it would be your opinion then that it's better to leave it as a local development?
MR. SMITH: Oh, it's --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Or do you have guidelines?

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

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

PARTICIPANT: Yes.

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

MR. SMITH: Sure, sure.

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

MR. SMITH: Yeah. So the Voc. Rehab. transition counselors tend to the be the organizing agents and they're supported by our transition director. And then we also have a large annual conference where I think it was around 300 to
almost 400 people of schools, employers, VR designated agencies. It was everyone in the same room.

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

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

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

Almost all of our funding priorities are very emergency based, loss of home, loss of caregiver. The one area that is not emergency based is continuation of employment. And so I
think that the high schools are very good about recognizing that a kid is more likely to come into services in the state of Vermont if they've got employment and they are at risk of losing that employment without services.

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

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

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

It's a checklist that assures that all of the adult service providers are part of the team, that all of the different community resources are at the table well before that person graduates from high school. We can also call John into
situations where maybe there's opposing views about whether a student should graduate or not. And he can come in and provide some application to the school team as well as to us.

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

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

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

So this is sort of a hypothetical, but...
feeling some churn in the water. And so I want to
know what the Vermont take or experience suggests
about what the world looks like as people reflect
and consider what the future of 14(c) is.

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

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

COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Subminimum
wage.

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

COMMISSIONER KLANDNEY: Your
organization was one who went through the
transition. Is that right?

MS. SIGHTLER: That's right.

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

And so part of what I'm asking is based
on this state's experience, what insights, if any,
do we have about how you go from one state of affairs, the status quo, to possible other states of affairs? Recognizing every state is different, every individual case of support need is different, employer needs are different.

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

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

And I'm not sure in your work, in looking at this, what preserving 14(c) does what it does for individuals versus what it might do for businesses. My business is supporting people and their civil rights and their success in the community. And at the same time, building a
community -- this is actually a tagline. This is part of our mission statement. But building a community where people participate and belong.

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

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

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

So it's a true reality for the states who are looking to stop this or to transition away from using 14(c). But there is a world beyond that
that I think we can -- and many other states can too. I mean, it's not just Vermont.

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

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

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

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

And so I think there's a philosophical mining that needs to happen where you create the
desire for change by identifying the reasons and the need for a change. And then it's a step-by-step process. And I think that the change management that you see on a small scale is applicable to this on a large scale.

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

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

And if you don't have a supported workshop, I suspect that in any place where that
occurs right now, you will end up with an industry that's not getting its needs met. And the conversation to that industry is, how do we then meet your needs in a different way? Because we're no longer going to be doing piecework for you. How is that going to happen? Well, let me tell you how that's going to happen, and you start to build.

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

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

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

MS. SIGHTLER: Jennie?

COMMISSIONER HUTT: -- parallel.

MS. MASTERSON: '92 was when we closed the training school. But we started closing sheltered workshops in Vermont in 1979. I was a
sheltered workshop manager in Middlebury and it spanned over, like, six month period. And there was a sheltered workshop event and -- one sheltered workshop event. In another part of the state, the state worked with them. That agency had closed down over a two-year period but it only took them about a year.

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

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

And then you have in place the model by which you can start to look at the cohort that remains in the workshop to make some decisions
around how we'd like to kind of move through that cohort.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: No, you're not.

MS. MASTERS: There are concrete ways --
COMMISSIONER HERIOT: What I'm interested in, maybe I'm confused here. But you're talking about sheltered workshops, and I'm talking about 14(c). They're no coextensive, are they? You can have nonclosed workshops but nevertheless a 14(c). That's what I want to know about is 14(c), not closed workshops.

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

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

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

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

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

MS. MASTerson: Yes, we phased it out in 2002.

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

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

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: Okay. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: So one more on
this topic. I think the central argument of those
that had concern about a 14(c) phase out, maybe
there are three. One is that it will affect demand
for people with a range of disabilities. That the
cost of employing people with a range of
disabilities will become too high. The net result
being that there will be fewer opportunities. And
we already have not enough opportunities for people
in that circumstance.

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

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

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

MS. PAYA: Yeah. And it's a fine
balance. This is Michelle Paya. It's that fine
balance. And as Monica said earlier is our clients
are the folks we support and also the business
It's a really complex process. We see that as minimum wage increases. It's scary because businesses are looking for bottom lines. They need to make sure they're making -- they're in the black and they're making profit. But our jobs are to educate them and how important it is to have neurodiversity within an organization and that everybody can do the job.

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

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

COMMISSIONER ADEGBILE: Okay. As you get in, I'll add back in my third piece which I think bridges perhaps some distance between Gail's comment -- Commissioner Heriot's comment and mine.
which is just the concern of change management.

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

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

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

But if you're running a sheltered workshop, you have financial interest in paying as little as possible to your workers and getting the
most product out there.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Well, how did it occur at Champlain Services? Because you were the last workshop that closed. Ms. Masterson said you tried a one-year plan but it took two. I think that's what she said. And I think what Commissioner Adegbile is asking and Commissioner
Heriot is how -- I mean, you were here, right? And Ms. Masterson was here. I don't know if anybody else was here. But how -- well, okay.

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: How --

MS. SIGHTLER: -- in the system.

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

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

Families who originally said, my adult child won't be safe in the community, were able to
see the transition of their adult child and see that they became more independent, that they became more communicative, that their wellness was improved, that the community was embracing them because they'd been given an opportunity.

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

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

And I think that's something that Vermont did really well. They said, this is just not an option anymore. We believe in community-based supports, and that's the direction we're going. And so you need to figure out how to do it and at a pace that's slow enough to allow people to have the employment.
COMMISSIONER HUTT: Right. And I would just add -- this is Monica. So I actually was a case manager at the time, and one of the women I was a case manager for was working here at CCS, Logic Projects. So I have lots of experience with that and with individual and that family.

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: So how --

MS. MASTERS: This is Jennie Masterson. Just to add what Monica is saying. At the time, somebody referenced the close partnership between the funder which was the state of Vermont and the sheltered workshop.
And every month, there was a large meeting where the director of the funding mechanism of adult services and the business office that was making the money flow between the agency and the state met with Champlain Community Services.

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

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

Many of the parents were elderly. And so some of the residential services were very important to also configure and development at that time. The State of Vermont did include new funding and Voc. Rehab. added was funding. So each individual had a new budget that was attached to
them that translated to what the new service practices must look like.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: So can I ask --

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Before you go
on, Commissioner Heriot had another question.

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

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

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

The focus and the hope is that people are going to be using competitive employment and be
employed because that really does create more
connection, better physical, mental, emotional
health. But if that's not an option and those
community supports are the backstop to that.

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Absolutely. But it's a guarantee if you stay at subminimum wage
that you're going to need federal benefits. There's no way around that. They're not going to make enough to live at subminimum wage.

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

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

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

To not continue that I think is a real travesty to be honest with you. And I think that's why I get to pushing about that subminimum wage
because I just feel like it's a disincentive to independence. It's a disincentive to inclusion. It's a disincentive to your own value as a human being basically.

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

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Right.

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HUTT: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Would you like to say something?

MS. BONGES: I would like to say
something. This is Micky Bonges. And coming from the other end of the spectrum where I'm working with kids that are 14, 15, 16 year olds for the first time that they've ever worked. And some of the kids come from poverty. And we work with quite a few kids that come from poverty.

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

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

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

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

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

COMMISSIONER HERIOT: What happened?

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

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

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Okay. And --

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

MS. SIGHTLER: Yeah.

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

MR. DAGUE: I'll do that.

II. ADJOURN MEETING

COMMISSIONER KLADNEY: Anyways, this concludes the business of our subcommittee meeting.
today. If there's nothing further, I'll adjourn
the meeting at 2:49 Eastern Time. Thank you.
Thank you very much.

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