



STATEMENT FROM CHAIR ROCHELLE M. GARZA On National Disability Independence Day, We Must Continue the Fight for Equal Wages

Today marks **National Disability Independence Day**, commemorating the signing of the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** in 1990—a landmark civil rights law that affirmed the right of people with disabilities to live with dignity, access, and full inclusion in American society.

As Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, I take this moment to reflect on our continued efforts to advance disability rights. In 2020, the Commission released a landmark report, [*Subminimum Wages: Impacts on the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities*](#), calling for the repeal of Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This provision, which allows employers to pay workers with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage, is a relic of a bygone era.

Our investigation found that it is discriminatory, unjust, and inconsistent with the values enshrined in the ADA. The Commission's findings helped shape federal policy efforts, including the *Raise the Wage Act* and executive action to phase out subminimum wages for federal contractors with disabilities.

The Commission's report was informed by testimony from experts, site visits across the country, and more than 9,700 public comments—the most received in the Commission's history. The message was clear: people with disabilities deserve equal pay for equal work, the opportunity to engage meaningfully in their communities, and the right to shape their own economic futures.

As we honor the anniversary of the ADA, we celebrate the progress made—and recognize the work that remains. Ending discriminatory wage practices is essential to building a nation where every person with a disability can thrive with dignity and independence.

Although recent federal efforts to phase out 14(c) have stalled, I remain encouraged by the growing momentum at the state level. More than a dozen states have passed laws to end subminimum wage practices, reflecting bipartisan recognition that this outdated system must be replaced.

On this National Disability Independence Day, I reaffirm my commitment to ending subminimum wages and to building a future where all people with disabilities have the opportunity to live and work with dignity, equality, and respect.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 56 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov.