

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 127

Encouraging the Secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to adopt and implement Employment First practices.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 8, 2012

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2012

WHEREAS, individuals with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities have the ability and the desire to seek employment in integrated community settings that provide opportunities to earn competitive wages and benefits and encourage the individual to reach his or her maximum potential, achieve economic self-sufficiency, contribute to the sustainability of our communities, and to be treated as equal members of the Commonwealth's workforce; and

WHEREAS, despite the positive impacts of employment, individuals with disabilities have the highest unemployment rate in the Commonwealth and the rate continues to rise; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities, like other citizens who are employed, have a positive impact on the economy by earning wages, paying taxes, purchasing consumable goods and services in their communities, and having the economic opportunity to become self-supporting; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities are a largely untapped resource for employers, and the hiring of Virginians with disabilities is not only vital to individual human potential but also represents a viable business solution to meet the demands of an aging and retiring workforce; and

WHEREAS, twenty-six states have implemented Employment First initiatives to combat the high unemployment rate among individuals with disabilities and facilitate the employment of individuals with disabilities by making integrated community-based competitive employment, including supported employment, the first option explored in day service planning for youth and adults receiving services through state and local agencies, and with the necessary resources, furthering the development and implementation of appropriate job supports and other services to maximize employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Employment First policy is grounded in a framework of increased integration, independence, productivity, and employment that is based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, interests, and informed choice of an individual as the desired outcomes of services and supports; and

WHEREAS, implementation of an Employment First initiative in Virginia will lead to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, resulting in immeasurable benefits for individuals, families, employers, and communities across the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That Secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Superintendent of Public Instruction be encouraged to adopt and implement Employment First practices in providing and coordinating services to Virginians with disabilities; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate provide a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.