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**President and CEO:** Bob Brown

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Washington, DC 20202

RE: Docket ID: ED-2017-OS-0074-0001

Ms. Malawer,

Opportunity Village and the families we serve are pleased to offer public comment regarding possible restriction to employment due to regulations. There are two specific rules that we have identified as causing undue restriction or barriers to employment. First, the expanded qualifications to “competitive integrated employment” and, second, the added definition of “work unit” that goes beyond the statute established by Congress.

We are concerned about the expanded qualifications issued to the definition of “competitive integrated employment.” We are concerned that the current definition [section 361.5 (c) (9) (ii) (A)] is too restrictive and that any job where Opportunity Village paid individuals with disabilities on a service contract through the AbilityOne or “state use” program (Preferred Purchase in Nevada) will not qualify as community integrated employment because of the high percentage of their fellow workers who must also (by regulation) have disabilities.

We believe the addition of the “work unit” modifying definition added by the Department of Education in Title IV, Section 404(5) is too restrictive and goes beyond the statute Congress established. State VR agencies are interpreting the definitions and regulations too strictly and are not referring people to open positions. We respectfully request you reconsider and revise the language in the rule to align with Congressional intent. RSA should advise State VR offices to take an expansive view as to what qualifies as competitive integrated employment. Additionally, eliminate the guidance (FAQ) document issued that clouds the intent of the law.

Defining integration as occurring at the “work unit” level is limiting and subjective. This type of evaluation does not apply to the general workforce. Furthermore, it segregates people with disabilities who have every right to their privacy. The “work

unit” targets people who work through providers of services, like Opportunity Village, which is unfair.

Section 511 of WIOA is being interpreted through some State VR agencies to prevent people with disabilities who are under the age of 25 from working under 14(c) certificates even when there is no job for them elsewhere. Many people earn more than just a paycheck when they go to work; they earn the dignity, respect, and self-esteem which comes with earning a paycheck. Opportunity Village believes that everyone with a disability should have the option to work in the community. We believe that even people with the most profound disability should have the sense of pride and purpose that comes from earning a paycheck. We need your help to protect some of the most vulnerable citizens in Nevada and around the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Bob Brown', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Bob Brown  
President and CEO