

Public Comments

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My name is Steven Cohen, and I am an adult self-advocate with autism. Based upon matters I plan to address, I

disclaim at the outset that these comments are offered as a citizen, and do not necessarily represent the views of any organization I am affiliated with and/or their funding source (s). In these uncertain times concerning taxes and health care, I have never been more scared to live as part of the United States, much less Nevada, the state which rarely “gets it.”

I begin my day today as I ended yesterday, hearing the monthly report from the Autism Treatment Assistance Program (ATAP, for short). As we fast approach the next legislative session, now is the time to begin to develop partnerships which solve the global question, “What barriers exist toward the service of more children?” Having missed the diagnostic window to receive early intervention services in my then-home state of New Jersey, I am paying for it at almost 3 decades old in most measurable areas that a person without a disability would define as representing a quality of life, much less a fulfilling one.

I could spend 5 minutes on Vocational Rehabilitation alone. Despite having recently closed my case at the One Stop Career Center office in Southern Nevada, I remain willing to work with administration to find solutions to solve the nationally-reported 75%-80%+ unemployment/underemployment statistic re: persons with autism. In addition to updating the outcomes data recently reported to the Autism Commission, I am hopeful administration would be willing to explore business cultural changes, including, but not limited to, expansions of the 700 hour program, during the next session. I will revisit this topic in my concluding remarks.

Regarding the budget, I hope that staff and/or partners will be able to address any impacts which may result from unfortunate provisions contained within HR 1. Going back to my opening statement, it is for these reasons that I can now only skim many list serve messages that I receive, both Federally and from within Nevada. While my folks and I have lived here for over a decade, I will never consider Nevada my home. While I have long made it a goal to be free from any public income streams, many of my colleagues around these tables will likely never receive such an opportunities. People with disabilities are people first, and should be treated as such within our worldwide culture.

Last, and certainly not least, this year, I have the prestige to be led by Dr. Rock and his phenomenal team of statewide faculty as Nevada Leadership Education in Neuro-Developmental Disabilities' (LEND, for short) first self-advocate trainee in program history. If you have not yet had the opportunity, I would strongly encourage you to apply when re-

cruitment for the 2018-2019 class opens up in the Spring. If there has been an opportunity to improve our state and/or myself, I am usually one of, if not the first, to jump on it. With that in mind, I have brought my Council Partners in Policymaking application with me, but wanted to gain some clarification as to what has been wrong with the similar program at the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities (NCED, for short). This is by no means a knock on the skills or abilities of the supervising staff member for the NCED program, but mass confusion was created by having designed the Council's program very similarly to NCED's. As an accountant by degree, I jumped on the opportunity to examine the duplication of programs as a function of outcomes as part of a team for the LEND leadership project this year. With that in mind, if any member of the table has any preferably electronic documentation which could be of assistance to the development of our end product (e.g., the VR State Plan), please let us know. We will likely be sharing our end product with affected stakeholders upon conclusion, so there should be no surprises as to where Nevada stands, when compared with other appropriate states throughout the country.