

Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wage
Monday, March 18, 2024
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Sonia Bonetti, Rebekah Griffith, Thoyd Warren, Tyler Rex, Felicia Johnson, Pamela Jones, Valarie Bishop, Robb McBurney, Amanda Hess, Darline Graham, Kimberly Tissot, David Rotholz

Guests: Bonita Benson (staff for Rebekah), Joel Smart (staff for Sonia), Ralph Courtney, Aiken DSNB, Becky Peters, DDSN, Lindsey Daniels, Community Options, Rey Miller, Sandy Jordan, Susan Davis, Marly Saade

Special Guest: Steven Achillies, Gigi's Playhouse

Legislative Staff: Mason Thomas

Kimberly Tissot called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm

Kimberly indicated a need to shift the agenda to welcome Steven Achillies from Gigi's Playhouse. Steven was part of the shift to eliminate subminimum wage in Oregon.

Steven indicated that his current organization is looking at opening a location in South Carolina. He outlined the Oregon lawsuit. The transition took lots of time and communication. Public meetings were held and lots of conversations with families occurred. Within 4-6 months all who wanted a job in the community had one. A lot of time was spent listening to individuals. There were lots of individuals who needed to develop skills for employment.

Discussion: Through word of mouth the program grew. They were able to get market rate for small businesses that could be run within the workshops. The state supplied funding of \$100,000 to make the transition. Portland used public transportation. They looked at using Lyft but that didn't work. They ended up paying staff where needed and extended work hours, including overtime if needed to make it work.

Lessons learned: State funds didn't cover everything for transportation; some individuals lost time with friends; had to develop positions within certain industries; needed benefit resources. Self-employment didn't work at the time. The rules in Oregon made it hard. The state put more money into employment. Vocational Rehabilitation assisted. Silos were broken down. Steven can get us more information. They did some quarterly social events so people could connect with friends.

The group thanked Steven for his time and information.

Robb provided a data summary from September through the end of February Numbers are down from 1111 to 321. # of Providers paying SMW went from 21 to 9. Individuals exiting SMH – 320 doing career prep, 225 referred to employment with DDSN, 17 referred to Voc Rehab (Chesco – Voc Rehab). 205 referred to non-vocational services and 86 no longer getting services (moved, died, didn't want, etc.)

Other info: provided TA to CSMs to help them navigate; day service standards were updates; training provided in-person and virtual. Robb will send feedback letter on WIOA.

Robb asked about #s in Pre-ETS; students leaving Project SEARCH; Employment First Oversight Commission (Kimberly shared this will not be appointed until the SMW Task Force finished its work).

Kimberly share that large grant with the Department of Education is awaiting agreements being finished.

Kimberly asked about knowing which providers to reach out to do benefits counseling. Robb will share report from the Provider Network.

Mason indicated that budget needs will go through the Senate Finance Committee. Likely via Proviso.

David will share the updated Evaluation and Monitoring report.

Margaret Alewine was looking into the Personal Needs request.

Next meeting is March 25, 2024 at 10:00 am. This will be a virtual meeting to review remaining items that weren't covered today and discuss appropriation request.

If any other committee has a report, Kimberly asked that we share them with the whole task force on March 25. David made a motion to adjourn and Darline seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:31 pm