

# Rep. Meier and Advocates Defend Jobs for Workers with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities

by Chris Guy

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**SPRINGFIELD** - Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and their advocates joined State Representative Charlie Meier (R-Okawville) at the Illinois Capitol in Springfield on Wednesday to send a message to lawmakers it's 'My Work. My Choice' concerning legislation pending in the legislature that could jeopardize their job.

At the state capitol, Rep. Meier was joined by disability advocates who wore t-shirts that said 'My Work. My Choice.' According to State Representative Charlie Meier, "We are here to protect the jobs of our residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We want to protect their choice and their job, hence My Work. My Choice. We are opposed to legislation pending in the Illinois House that would put at least 50% of 14c workshop employees with disabilities out of work throughout the state. This number comes from providers who have switched, and some even laid off 70% of their workforce."

What are 14c workshops? "14c workshops throughout Illinois help people with disabilities, whether it's managing their money with their paychecks or getting them a job," said Rep. Meier. "They provide transportation for them, they make sure they have their medication. Many of our workshops also provide CILA housing and care for residents. We are glad 14c workshops exist and work with our residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities by giving them the chance to show everybody how proud they are of their paycheck."

The legislation (HB 793) may also have an unintended consequence for workers receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). A percentage of their supplemental income could be reduced if they take a minimum-wage job, and if a worker quits or loses their job, they could end up waiting nine months for their SSI or SSDI benefits to be restored.

Rep Meier added, "House Bill 793 would raise the minimum wage for people with disabilities. It sounds wonderful, but the problem is for a 14c workshop, this legislation will probably cost the jobs of half the people. It's very important that we work on this bill, make some changes, we keep everybody with a job and maintain the chance of having a job. It's their job and it should be their choice."

***\*View Wednesday's 'My Work. My Choice.' press conference in its entirety here: [https://youtu.be/ mFSQhEwqAw?si= luQIBrz3aK1iqRZ](https://youtu.be/mFSQhEwqAw?si=luQIBrz3aK1iqRZ)***

***\*\*Pictured enclosed from left to right: David, a workshop employee in southern Illinois, 'My Work. My Choice.' advocate Rita Winkeler, Rep. Charlie Meier, Rep. Katie Stuart, Rep. Dave Severin, and John Huelskamp, Executive Director of Community Link.***

