



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2016

Bethany Alvaré
(202) 540-8014
balvare@tash.org

TASH Applauds the U.S. AbilityOne Commission’s Declaration in Support of Minimum Wage for Program Employees

WASHINGTON, DC – TASH applauds the U.S. AbilityOne Commission’s declaration that calls for all AbilityOne participating organizations to commit to and begin paying the Federal minimum wage, or state minimum wage, if higher.

“Eliminating the use of sub-minimum wage payments, allowed under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, is a step in the right direction of overall AbilityOne reform, said Barb Trader, executive director of TASH. “TASH members have been seeking equity in wages for employees with disabilities for decades. We hope this move provides a catalyst for wage reform across the country.”

The Commission’s announcement includes the intent “to accomplish the transition for all AbilityOne employees to earn full minimum wages.” “We are cautiously optimistic with this announcement – time will tell if this results in improved lives for people with disabilities. If non-profit agencies operating AbilityOne contracts commit to maintaining employment for all individuals while raising wages and no employees are harmed by losing jobs or experiencing reduced work hours, then we can call this change a true success.”

The AbilityOne Program is among the nation’s largest providers of jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. The AbilityOne Program uses the purchasing power of the Federal Government to buy products and services from participating, community-based nonprofit agencies nationwide, dedicated to training and employing individuals with disabilities.

In September 2015, seven leading organizations comprised of Americans with disabilities, including TASH, set forth seven principles for overhaul of the AbilityOne Program. These principles aimed to bring the program up to contemporary standards of practice for supporting people with disabilities to access competitive integrated employment. They also called to end the payment of subminimum wages to program employees.

##

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, TASH is an international grassroots leader in advancing inclusive communities through research, education and advocacy. Founded in 1975, we are a volunteer-driven organization that advocates for human rights and inclusion for people with the most significant disabilities and support needs – those most vulnerable to segregation, abuse, neglect and institutionalization. The inclusive practices we validate through research have been shown to improve outcomes for all people. More information about TASH can be found at www.tash.org.