



Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress

TO: Members of 'Workability' Subcommittee (Committee on Children, Families & Persons with Disabilities)
FROM: John Dunleavy, MDSC Self Advocate Advisory Council member
RE: Public Hearing on Workforce Development for Persons with Disabilities
DATE: October 22, 2019

Good morning. I am John Dunleavy. I am a member of the Self Advocate Advisory Council of the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress. We speak for thousands of people with Down syndrome and their families.

Four years ago, we started a new employment campaign called Your Next Star (www.yournextstar.org). It shows employers that good things happen when they hire a person with Down syndrome. I am proud to be part of the campaign to teach employers what's possible.

I have worked at the TD Garden for 8 years. I got my job through an internship from my high school in Winchester. My job is important because it gives me confidence and pride. By earning my own money, I am more independent. I have to dress nice. That makes me feel good. I have also met a lot of friends. I even see them outside work sometimes.

At work, they can see that I am a hard worker. They see that I am committed. They see that I have a positive attitude. They see that I am a good friend.

I'm here today to tell the Committee that it's important for people like me to have jobs in the community. I want to ask you to do everything possible to help more people like me get meaningful jobs.

Some of my friends aren't as lucky as me. They don't have good jobs where they are valued. There need to be more high school internships available to more people with Down syndrome. They should teach how to take trains, buses or Lyfts. They should teach people how to put money into the bank and get money out.



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I also think people with Down syndrome should go to college if they want. We at the MDSC are advocating for the higher education bill - House Bill 1219 and Senate Bill 756, so that more people with intellectual disabilities can attend college. I hope you will support that too because it leads to more employment opportunities for people like me.

Thank you for listening to me today.

Sincerely,
John Dunleavy

P.S. For further comment, you can reach MDSC Communications Director at 781-221-0024 x202 or jkomyerov@mdsc.org.