



# **ASAN**

**AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK**

# **Explainer: Take Action on Fair Pay for Disabled Workers!**

## Introduction: What is the Fair Labor Standards Act? What is 14(c)?

The Fair Labor Standards Act is a law passed in 1938. The Fair Labor Standards Act did some helpful things. The law made a minimum wage for everyone in the United States. The minimum wage is the smallest amount that your boss is allowed to pay you for your work. Right now (in October 2023), the minimum wage is \$7.25. The law says that workers have to be paid at least \$7.25 for every hour of work they do.

But the Fair Labor Standards Act leaves out some people. The part of the law that leaves out disabled people is called **Section 14(c)**. Section 14(c) lets companies pay disabled people less than the minimum wage. Companies get a special piece of paper called a 14(c) certificate. The certificate says that the company is allowed to pay disabled people less than the minimum wage. Today, around 44,400 disabled workers in the U.S. make less than the minimum wage. This is because of Section 14(c). It is wrong to pay workers with disabilities less than minimum wage. Because of Section 14(c), many workers with disabilities do not make enough money to survive. Workers with disabilities should be paid fairly.

You can read more about the Fair Labor Standards Act and Section 14(c) in ASAN's toolkit "[Real Work For Real Pay: A Self-Advocate's Guide to Employment Policy](#)." The toolkit is available in Easy Read and plain language.

## How can we end the 14(c) program?

The Department of Labor (DOL) is the part of the government that is in charge of the 14(c) program. [ASAN wants the Department of Labor to get rid of the 14\(c\) program](#). The DOL is thinking about whether they should change or get rid of the 14(c) program.

The Department of Labor wants to hear from people about what they think about 14(c). They have scheduled meetings to hear from people about 14(c). It's important that people with disabilities show up and tell them that we want real jobs with real pay!

## How do I attend the meeting?

The meeting is virtual and on Webex. **You need to sign up beforehand to get the link!**

The third meeting is on November 15th from 5:30PM-7PM EST.

You need to [register here](#) for the meeting by November 6th to get the link.

You should sign up and check the box that says you want to speak.

## I've never used Webex before. What do I need to know about Webex to participate in the meeting?

Webex is a video call platform that is sort of like Zoom. You don't need to download anything ahead of time to use Webex. You can click "join in browser."

When it's time for the meeting, click on the link you got in your email inbox.

There is an option to use your phone to call in, but you can't do that if you want to speak. You have to use your computer if you want to speak.

There will be a box for you to type in your name. Make sure you type the same first and last name that you registered for the meeting with.

When it is your turn to speak, the person running the meeting will call your name. A box will pop up asking you to allow the host to unmute you. Make sure you check this checkbox. If you do not, people will not be able to hear you.

Webex has some explainers on [how to join a Webex meeting](#) and [how to change your audio and video settings](#). The explainers are written using plain language and have pictures of the different buttons and settings.

## What should I say at the listening session?

You will have only 2 minutes to share your thoughts. You should get your comments ready ahead of time. You can practice with a timer to make sure you can say your most important points in 2 minutes or less. The person running the meeting will ask you to stop talking once 2 minutes are over.

First, introduce yourself. Say your name and how you are connected to this issue. Here are some examples of things you could say:

- I am disabled.
- I am a self advocate.
- I work at a job that pays less than minimum wage.
- I get paid a fair wage at my job. I get support that helps me to do my job with a disability.
- I used to work a job that paid subminimum wage. Now, I have a job that pays at least minimum wage. [You can add a sentence about what supports helped you get a job that pays at least minimum wage.]

Then, clearly say that you want the Department of Labor to end the 14(c) program.

Lastly, share why you want the Department of Labor to end the 14(c) program. Here are some examples of things you could say:

- Disabled people should not be paid less money because we are disabled.
- With the right support, disabled people can do real work for real pay.
- Disabled people deserve a living wage.
- State governments can fund programs to help disabled people transition to jobs with fair wages. Vocational Rehabilitation and supported employment programs should get more state Medicaid funding than sheltered workshops.

If you have a story about your own experience working for subminimum wage or working in supported employment for fair pay, you can share that. If you want to learn how to share your story at this type of meeting, [read our toolkit](#).

## Conclusion

It is very important for self advocates to share our thoughts on 14(c) at this meeting. The Department of Labor needs to know that we want fair pay for all disabled people! Thank you for taking action on this important issue.