

# How to meet with your Representatives on the House Education and Work Committee about TCIEA

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## Words to know

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**Bill** - An idea for a law.

**Bipartisan support** - When both Democrats and Republicans agree about a bill.

**Chair** - The person who is in charge of a committee.

**Committee** - A small group of legislators who think about and work on a bill. Different committees focus on bills that are about different topics.

**Competitive Integrated Employment** - When disabled people get jobs in the community. It also means disabled people get paid fairly for their work. Competitive Integrated Employment gets called "CIE" for short.

**Congress** - The part of the government that decides which bills become law. Congress has 2 parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. This guide focuses on the House of Representatives.

**Cosponsor** - A legislator who puts their name on a bill to show other legislators that they support it.

**Discrimination** - Being treated unfairly because of who you are. For example, paying disabled people subminimum wage is a kind of discrimination.

**Economy** - The resources a certain place has (like money or goods). It also means how the government manages those resources. The economy controls how people earn, spend, and save money.

**House Education and Workforce Committee (HEWC)** - A committee that works on bills about schools, students, teachers, workers, and businesses.

**Legislator** - The people in Congress who vote on bills.

**Minimum wage** - The least amount of money a worker can be paid for doing an hour of work.

**Package** - A group of bills that are about similar things. Legislators vote on all the bills in a package at the same time.

**Representative** - The legislators in the House of Representatives.

**Subminimum wage** - Getting paid less than minimum wage. In the U.S., some jobs can pay disabled people subminimum wage.

**Sheltered workshops** - Workplaces that keep disabled people segregated. Some sheltered workshops also pay subminimum wage.

**Segregation** - Keeping different groups of people separate from each other. For example, keeping disabled workers separate from non-disabled workers is segregation.

**Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act** - A bill that would help people with disabilities get better jobs in the community if it became law. We call the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act "TCIEA" for short.

# What is TCIEA?

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## **The Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment**

**Act** is an idea for a law. If it passed, the law would help people with disabilities get better jobs in the community. We call the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act “TCIEA” for short. TCIEA is pronounced “tee-kuh”.

TCIEA would help more people with disabilities get **Competitive Integrated Employment**. Competitive Integrated Employment means that disabled people get jobs in the community. It also means disabled people get paid fairly for their work. Competitive Integrated Employment gets called “CIE” for short.

TCIEA would give states and businesses money to help disabled people get better jobs. TCIEA would also stop states and businesses from paying disabled people less than minimum wage. Minimum wage is the least amount of money a worker can be paid for doing an hour of work.

For example, the minimum wage for the whole U.S. is \$7.25 an hour. That means it is against the law to pay someone less than \$7.25 an hour for their work.

When someone is paid less than minimum wage, that is called **subminimum wage**. Some states and businesses are still allowed to pay workers with disabilities subminimum wage. TCIEA would make sure this stops happening.

TCIEA would also stop states and businesses from segregating disabled workers from non-disabled workers. **Segregation** means keeping different groups of people separate from each other. It is not fair to disabled workers to keep them segregated from non-disabled workers.

**Sheltered workshops** are workplaces that keep disabled people segregated. Some sheltered workshops also pay subminimum wage. TCIEA would help states make new and better workplaces besides sheltered workshops. TCIEA would help people with disabilities move from sheltered workshops to better jobs.

To learn more about what would happen if TCIEA becomes a law, [Click here](#).

# What is the House Education and Workforce Committee?

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TCIEA is a bill. A **bill** is an idea for a law. TCIEA needs to get voted on before it becomes a law. In the U.S., **Congress** is the part of the government that decides which bills become law. **Legislators** are the people in Congress who vote on bills.

Congress has 2 parts: The Senate and the House of Representatives. When we say “the House” in this guide, we are talking about the House of Representatives. Legislators in the House are called **Representatives**. Right now, Representatives in the House are deciding what they might do about TCIEA.

To become a law, a bill has to go to committee. A **committee** is a small group of legislators who think about and work on a bill. Committees work on bills before all the Representatives in the House vote on the bill. Different committees focus on bills that are about different topics.

One committee is the **House Education and Workforce Committee (HEWC)**. HEWC works on bills about schools, students, teachers, workers, and businesses. HEWC is working on TCIEA because TCIEA is about workers and businesses.

## Why do we want people to meet with Representatives who are part of the House Education and Workforce Committee?

Face-to-face meetings with legislators or people who work for them are very important. Legislators cannot ignore people that are right in front of them talking about a problem. When legislators meet with people, it helps legislators put a “face” to a certain bill. Your story could affect how a legislator votes on the bill. They might remember you and your story when they go to vote.

Only some people’s Representatives are on the House Education and Workforce Committee. Right now, we only need people to set up meetings with Representatives who are on HEWC. HEWC is the only committee who gets to decide what happens to TCIEA right now.

If HEWC decides TCIEA should be a law, then the rest of Congress might get to vote on it.

Everyone living in the U.S. has a Representative in the House. You can check if your Representative is a part of HEWC.

- First, see who your Representative is by entering your zip code [here](#).
- Then, see if your Representative is on the House Education & Workforce Committee. Check if they are on the member list [here](#).

If your Representative is not on HEWC, you can still support TCIEA in other ways!

- You can share this guide on social media. That way, people who have Representatives on HEWC can see it. Then, they can set up their own meeting with their Representative.

- You can also [share our Action Alert](#) to help more people learn about TCIEA.

If your Representative is on HEWC, here is what you can ask them to do to help pass TCIEA:

- Ask your Representative to tell the Chair of HEWC to put TCIEA in the final workforce and apprenticeship package.
  - The Chair is the person who is in charge of a committee. The Chair of HEWC is Representative Virginia Foxx. If other Representatives on HEWC tell the Chair that TCIEA should pass, TCIEA is more likely to pass.
  - One way for TCIEA to have a better chance at becoming law is to be part of a package. A package is a group of bills that are about similar things. Legislators vote on all the bills in a package at the same time. There are other bills in the same package as TCIEA that Representatives want to pass. We want TCIEA to be part of a package so that it has a better chance of passing. The package we want TCIEA to be a part of is called the Workforce and Apprenticeship package. Ask your Representative to cosponsor TCIEA.
  - A cosponsor is a legislator who puts their name on a bill to show other legislators that they support it. Bills with more cosponsors have a better chance of getting voted on. If a bill does not get enough cosponsors, HEWC might not ask the rest of Congress to vote. That means TCIEA would not get the chance to be a law.
  - Ask your Representative to cosponsor TCIEA. That shows HEWC that TCIEA has a lot of support!



- ❑ You can tell your Representative that TCIEA has bipartisan support. Bipartisan support means that both Democrats and Republicans want to pass TCIEA.
  - ❑ For example, let's say that your Representative is a Republican. You can tell your legislator that Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers is a cosponsor of TCIEA. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers is a Republican. She has worked with a lot of other Republican Representatives.

# How do I talk to my Representative about TCIEA?

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You can ask for a virtual meeting with your Representative's office by taking these steps:

- First, find out who your Representative is by entering your zip code [here](#).
- Then, find out if your Representative is on the House Education and Workforce Committee (HEWC). Check if their name is on the member list [here](#).
  - Only schedule a meeting if your Representative is on the HEWC. You don't need to meet with other Representatives about TCIEA right now.
- If your Representative is on the HEWC, there are a few ways to ask for a virtual meeting with your Representative's office.
  - You can go to the website of your Representative's office.
    - You can find your Representative's website by clicking on their name [here](#).
    - Some Representatives have a page on their website where you can ask for a virtual meeting.
  - You can talk to your Representative's office on the phone. You can find your Representative's phone number [here](#).
  - You can email your Representative's office. Most Representatives have a contact form on their website that you can use to talk to them. If you write your email address, they will get back to you.

Here is a script for asking your Representative's office for a meeting. You can use this script if you call or email your Representative's office.

Hello.

My name is **[your name]**. I am a disabled person who lives in **[city, state]** and **[Representative's name]** is my Representative.

I would like to talk about a way for **[Representative's name]** to help states and businesses help disabled people get better jobs and earn more money. The bill is called the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (H.R.1263, TCIEA).

Do you have time for a virtual meeting this week?

Your Representative's office might not answer your first phone call or email. Wait 3 days after making your first call or email. If your Representative still does not answer, you can try again.

## Preparing for the meeting

1. Find out if there are sheltered workshops in your state.
  - ❑ Here is the list of states where there are currently sheltered workshops as of November 2024: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.
2. Find out if the Representative you're meeting with knows anything about work and disability. Check if they said anything about sheltered workshops or subminimum wage.
  - ❑ Search [**"Representative name"**] + **"sheltered workshops"** and see if anything comes up. Try different search terms, like:
    - "subminimum wage,"
    - "competitive integrated employment,"
    - "employment first,"
    - "supported employment".

If your Representative has ever said anything about jobs for disabled people, talk about those things in your meeting.

❑ Use the website [Govtrack.us](https://govtrack.us) to see what your Representative has said or done about different problems. On the website, you can search your state and find your Representative. Then, you can see if your Representative has said or done anything about:

- Jobs and working.
- Services for people with disabilities.

3. ASAN can help you practice for your meeting! If you have questions about your meeting or want to practice, contact us. You can email Jules Good, ASAN's Programs Coordinator, at [jgood@autisticadvocacy.org](mailto:jgood@autisticadvocacy.org).

## What to expect at the meeting

1. Introduce yourself to the person you are meeting with. Quickly say who you are and what town you live in. You can also say why you care about TCIEA, or jobs for people with disabilities in general.

Then, the person you are meeting with will introduce themselves to you. You will usually meet with someone who works for your Representative. You will usually not meet with your Representative themselves.

2. Explain what you want your elected official to do. You can say:

“I would like [**Representative’s name**] to do three things.”

- Tell Chairwoman Foxx to include TCIEA in the final workforce and apprenticeship package.
- Join Representative McMorris Rodgers in cosponsoring TCIEA.
- Ensure TCIEA’s passage this congressional session.

3. Explain why you want your Representative to do these things. You can use the “What to Talk About” section below to plan what you want to say. If you have a personal story about working as a disabled person, you can share that, too. [Read our toolkit about sharing your story](#) to learn how to do that.

4. The person you are meeting with might ask you questions as you are talking. They might ask a question you don’t know the answer to. If that happens, you can say, “I am not sure. I will follow up with you on that in an email.” Do not try to answer questions if you do not know the answer. Write down questions the person asks so you can look up the answers later.

5. The person you are meeting with may need to leave before you are able to make all of your points. That is okay! You can follow up with them by email and send the rest of the information you have.
6. At the end of the meeting, thank the person for their time. Let them know that you will follow up with an email.

## What to Talk About

You should talk about the good things TCIEA does, like giving states and businesses money to help people with disabilities get good jobs. Do not just focus on the bad things that TCIEA stops, like subminimum wage and sheltered workshops. You want people to see TCIEA as a good thing, not just stopping a bad thing. Focusing on the good things TCIEA does can help that.

People will remember what you say better if you focus on the good things TCIEA does. People will be more likely to support TCIEA if you talk about the good things TCIEA does.

There are three different points you can make when you talk to your Representative about TCIEA. Each point shows how TCIEA can help people:

- TCIEA is good for the economy because it will help more people make more money.
- TCIEA makes things more fair for disabled people. Everyone should be able to get a good job in the community for at least minimum wage.
- There is a lot of evidence showing that the changes TCIEA makes will help. Evidence is facts and information about something.

Here is more information about each point to talk about with your Representative:



## TCIEA is good for the economy.

The economy means the resources a certain place has (like money or goods). It also means how the government manages those resources. The economy controls how people earn, spend, and save money. Here are some facts about how TCIEA helps the economy:

- Keeping disabled people in sheltered workshops costs a lot of money. It costs less money for disabled people to work in competitive integrated employment (CIE) jobs. When disabled people work in CIE jobs, the government spends less money to support disabled people.
  - Scientists who study jobs and workers have studied this issue. They wrote about what they found in the [Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation](#). The scientists found that states pay less for disability services when disabled people work in the community. Also, when disabled people have CIE jobs, the costs of supporting them goes down over time. This is the opposite of sheltered workshops, where the cost of supporting people goes up over time.
- When disabled people work CIE jobs, they earn more money. This means they have more money to spend on things like rent, food, and having fun in the community. When disabled people get paid well, they need less help from the government. For example, if someone gets a good job, they might not need SSI payments anymore. It also means disabled people have more money to spend at businesses in the community. That will also help businesses in the community to grow.
- A bunch of states have already gotten rid of subminimum wage for disabled people. In every state that has done this, more disabled people have gotten jobs in the community. You can look at the chart on page 4 of [this report by APSE on how subminimum wage jobs have changed](#).

## TCIEA makes things more fair for people with disabilities.

TCIEA is about fair pay for disabled people. Everyone should be able to work a job in the community for at least minimum wage.

- It is wrong to pay people less than minimum wage just because they are disabled. This is discrimination. **Discrimination** means treating someone badly because of who they are.
- Everyone who works should earn at least minimum wage. When people earn less than minimum wage, it is harder for them to live a good life.
- Right now, the law treats disabled people differently because we are disabled. TCIEA would say it is against the law to pay people less just because they are disabled. This would treat disabled people just like everyone else.
  - For example: Some sheltered workshops pay disabled people based on how fast or slow they work. For people without disabilities, jobs have to pay them the same amount no matter how fast or slow they work. TCIEA would make it so jobs have to pay disabled people the same amount no matter how fast or slow we work. This makes sure workers with disabilities get treated just like everyone else.
- TCIEA will help states and businesses close sheltered workshops and make more CIE jobs over time. This will help people with disabilities who need a lot of time and support to find a job in the community. Doing things over time is better than just shutting down all the sheltered workshops at once. That would leave a lot of people with disabilities with no choices for jobs. TCIEA will also give states and businesses money to help people with disabilities move into CIE jobs.

## There is a lot of proof that the changes TCIEA makes will help.

We have a lot of proof that TCIEA will help people. We already know getting rid of subminimum wages and helping people get CIE jobs helps a lot.

- One type of proof is personal stories from people who have experience with something. If you have a personal story about working as a disabled person, you can share it. [Read our toolkit about sharing your story](#) to learn how to do that.
  - Even if you do not have a story about this problem, you can still make a personal point. You could say something like, “As a disabled person, it is important to me that all disabled people get good jobs with fair pay.”
- Another type of proof is studies scientists have done. In 2021, [a study looked at other studies about jobs for disabled people](#). The study found that CIE jobs were better for disabled people than segregated jobs. Competitive integrated employment helped people get paid more and be in the community more. CIE jobs helped people with disabilities to have better lives.

But segregated jobs did the opposite. Segregated jobs did not help disabled people at work. Segregation did not help disabled people get paid more, have better lives, or be in the community more.

- Another type of proof is looking at people with disabilities who are already working in competitive integrated employment. We know from looking at people who already work in CIE jobs that CIE jobs help people live better lives. Disabled people have been working in CIE jobs for many years now. The changes TCIEA would make would not change how CIE works. It would just help more people get CIE jobs.

Even people who need a lot of support because of their disabilities can work CIE jobs. Here are some stories of people who went from working in sheltered workshops to working in CIE jobs:

- ❑ The ThinkWork! project [has videos about different people](#) who have gone from sheltered workshops to working in the community.
- ❑ The [Administration for Community Living collects stories](#) of people with disabilities who work in the community.
- ❑ The [Wise YouTube channel has a playlist of videos](#) about people who have gotten jobs in the community.

## After the meeting

1. Send an email to the person you met with. Thank them for their time, and share any follow-up information or materials you have. Be sure to [download the leave-behind letter linked here](#) and attach it to your email. You can use this template for your email:

Subject: Thank you for meeting with me!

Dear [**Name of person you met with**],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me about the Transformation to Competitive Integrated Employment Act (TCIEA)! I appreciate [**your/your office's**] interest in this bill. Attached is [a digital copy of a letter](#) from the End Subminimum Wage Coalition with more information about TCIEA.

[**If they had questions you did not know the answer to, say: "I will follow up with an answer to your question soon."**]

I would be happy to follow up again and keep in touch with you about TCIEA. Please let me know if you would like me to connect you with policy experts on this issue. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

[**Your Name**]

2. Be sure to check your email for any follow-up messages or questions from your Representative's office.
3. Email Jules Good, Programs Coordinator at ASAN, and let them know how your meeting went! Their email address is [jgood@autisticadvocacy.org](mailto:jgood@autisticadvocacy.org). You can also set up a time to talk with Jules over the phone or via Zoom. You can talk about your meeting or any TCIEA advocacy questions you may have.

□ Jules can also help you connect with other people and organizations in your state. You can work together to advocate for TCIEA and other disability justice topics.

4. [Sign up for ASAN's Newsletter](#) to get information about more chances to advocate. There will be other times when we need your support. Let's keep fighting for competitive integrated employment together.