



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

State Budget Includes Transition Planning for Individuals with Disabilities who Work in Sheltered Workshops

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ALBANY – For individuals with developmental disabilities, the challenges inherent in moving from a sheltered workshop to community employment are quite daunting. To address this issue, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean), Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, included an initiative in the state budget to develop a detailed transition plan for these individuals.

Language in the budget directs the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to create a detailed plan to assist individuals currently working in sheltered workshop programs. The plan will help with their transitions to integrated community work settings and community-based activities. It will also identify detailed options for individuals who cannot, or choose not to transition to integrated settings.

This transition plan is a necessity due to a recent announcement that New York State plans to discontinue funding for nonintegrated settings, including sheltered workshops that employ individuals with developmental disabilities.

“This is an issue that is deeply important to me. During the 15 years I worked at an agency for people with disabilities, before being elected as a state legislator, I had the privilege of building lifelong friendships with many people who worked at the agency’s workshop. It is an experience I hold close to my heart, and I treasure the relationships built during that time,” said Senator Young.

“I want to ensure that these individuals with developmental disabilities, along with thousands of other people in similar workshops across the state, have the best possible resources to support a transition to a community workplace, should they choose to do so. We must develop a complete list of options, the necessary tools, and the appropriate support systems to provide individuals with developmental disabilities access to meaningful employment and community activities,” said Senator Young.

To create the plan, OPWDD is directed to actively seek the input and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. These include individuals who currently work in sheltered workshops, their families or guardians, and workshop providers.

The plan will provide for outreach and educational efforts for individuals and their family members or guardians as they transition from sheltered workshops to community employment settings.

It will also provide a detailed analysis of the options that will be available to any individuals who cannot, or choose not to transition to integrated work settings in the community. Identifying options available to meet the needs and goals of these individuals is critical in protecting the integrity of the person-centered planning process, and it will help these individuals meet their needs and achieve their goals in light of the transition process.

Finally, the plan will include ongoing reviews of each individual's employment goals as part of the person-centered planning process.

The plan must be sent to the Governor and the Legislature by February 15, 2016.

Senator Young also recently introduced Senate Bill 3893-A, which would ensure that people with developmental disabilities who currently work in a sheltered workshop will have the choice to remain there.

"I will continue to work to preserve the widest range of career choices for individuals with developmental disabilities. At the same time, I recognize the need to address the challenges posed by a move away from sheltered workshops. By creating a detailed plan, we can ease the difficult burdens of a transition from a sheltered workshop to community employment or other opportunities," said Senator Young.