

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Human Services  
For HB 4169

Compiled on: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 11:27 PM

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Hearing Date: April 25, 2023 8:00 AM

Kimberly West  
Blake Grimes  
Gallatin, TX

My son has attended Gateway for many years, and it has been a positive Influence for him to be able to learn skills that will help him in our community. Blake is little to non- verbal. he will not be safe to work in our community. At Gateway, he is with like-minded coworkers. It allows him to earn a wage that gives him the extra money to buy thing he needs while learning work skills. Blake has been so upset since the change in March 2023. He asks me daily if I would talk with Maggie to see if he can work again. He doesn't understand that this is not Gateways Rule nor something he has done wrong. But these changes people have made in the best interest of Blake yet never met him. It is an absolute disgrace that we can put methadone clinic on every corner and my son can't learn skills and make money to help him live. Every time he asks me to find out when he will be allowed to start working again, it breaks my heart. People with this type of disability have little offered to them. i will fight this bill till my last breath. I pray for each person who is taking a stand against this bill and standing up for the voiceless of this state. my hat is off to you. Has anyone giving any ideas what my son can do if he is not allowed to work. Color, watch tv, sleep. That is unacceptable.

Allison Greer Francis  
CHCS  
SAN ANTONIO, TX

HB 4169 (Price) This program is designed to assist the recipient in achieving permanent integrated employment receiving compensation at or above the minimum wage in the recipient 's community and in accordance with state and federal law. This would provide purpose and meaning to the recipient and instill a sense of pride and self-worth.

Carla Riedl  
CHCS  
San Antonio, TX

My name is Carla Riedl and I work for CHCS in San Antonio. I am in favor of HB 4169 by Rep. Price. This program is designed to assist the recipient in achieving permanent integrated employment, receiving compensation at or above the minimum wage in the recipient's community and in accordance with state and federal law; this would provide purpose and meaning and instill a sense of pride and self-worth. I urge you to support HB 4169.

Andrea Grimes, CEO

Gateway Community Partners, Inc.

Jacksonville, TX

Gateway provides services to those with developmental disabilities. We have 3 large day sites, located in Lufkin, Jacksonville, and Palestine Texas, and serve approximately 250 individuals. The Health and Human Services recently dissolved the “day habilitation” services of the Home and Community Based Services (HCS) and Texas Home Living (TxHmL) programs replacing it with a new service called Individualized Skills and Socialization (ISS) services (effective 3/1/23). The billing guidelines of this new service has negatively impacted those we serve and our business model. Under the day habilitation model, those we serve were able to come to our facility and work our vocational contracts and earn much needed wages while our staff worked with and trained on skills such as personal grooming, socialization, health and safety or community employment acquisition while we billed for their attendance at our facility. This allowed those we serve to earn extra income to supplement their disability income that often does not even cover their basic needs. The new ISS billing guidelines prohibits those we serve from attending our facility, working to earn an income, and allowing us to bill for services. Basically, if they attend our facility and work, we are unable to bill for them being here, thus losing that source of much needed income. In order to keep our doors open, we have had to make the hard choice to limit work for the majority of those we serve and for some, not provide a work environment at all. We have had individuals that have attended our facilities for numerous years who are now losing their source of extra income because of the ISS billing guidelines. We are having to choose between giving up our vocational contracts or allowing those we serve to attend our facility and not bill for those services (i.e., “free services”) for which we simply cannot afford. Gateway has been in business since 1978 and I am unsure of our future and the future of those we serve. We are not the only organization in this situation, and those we serve are not the only ones across the state of Texas negatively impacted.

Giving those we serve choice in all aspects of their lives is important. It is their right to choose where and if they want to work. The choice to work has now been taken away. Although many do not want to hear this, we do serve individuals who are not capable of holding jobs in the community. We do serve individuals who have worked in the community but due to horribly bad experiences, have chosen to come back to our facility to work where they feel safe, accepted and have freedom to be who they are with no barriers. There is value in the work that we provide and the work they produce at our facilities. There is value in ensuring their rights are protected and they have choices. I implore you to support this bill, which in turn supports those with disabilities and their right to choose where and when they work.