

The Articles Didn't Tell the Full Story

Letter to the Editor: by Katrina Robertson, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, September 15, 2024

The paper's articles regarding the 14c program failed to meet the standards of good journalism. The articles were neither complete nor impartial.

My son, Noah, participates in a 14c program. Noah is 21 years old and resides at the Booneville Human Development Center. My son requires constant one-on-one supervision and a team of people to meet his needs and keep him and those around him safe. Despite his severe intellectual and mental health disabilities, the 14c program has given him something he would never have had the opportunity to have: a job. In fact, 100 percent of the residents at the Booneville Center participate in the wage program and have jobs. If you ask Noah what his favorite thing is, he will say it's his job. Noah does not have any concept of minimum wage; all he knows is he has some change in his pocket that he can use at the vending machine. He can feel productive, accomplished, and proud, often bragging about his work. The 14c wage program is not just a job for Noah; it's a lifeline providing him with dignity and purpose. Federally funded groups aim to shut down this valuable program. If they succeed, incredible harm will come to a segment of the population that cannot participate in competitive, integrated employment. By eliminating 14c and forcing an unrealistic employment policy for minimum wage, they have eliminated choices for persons like Noah.

The other side of this story must be told. A spotlight must be shown on those who benefit from it and what has happened to these people in states that have already eliminated the 14c program. Arkansas has 36 valuable, irreplaceable 14c programs operating in 30 counties.

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(This letter was written to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, which reprinted the articles from the Washington Post from August 3 and September 2, 2024)