

## **Summary of Comments from Public Meeting**

### **General**

- One attendee stated that employment is one of the most important things in our lives... and that Individuals need to be supported
- It was noted that VR impacts a lot of people in a positive way
- One attendee asked if either the Director or the Commissioner were present. After it was identified they were not, several individuals, noted they were concerned that administration was not present

### **A number of individuals expressed concern about reduced VR services noting that these are necessary services for persons with disability in the state**

- A number of individuals identified a concern around how the Agency got here so quickly
- Also individuals expressed frustration about timeline, both in move to order and in the timing of information being shared
- A number of individual expressed concerns that there was no data, information being shared that clearly showed why this was occurring and why
- Several individual specifically requested that VR delay entering an order of selection to further investigate what has occurred and potential solutions

### **Concerns around Transition Services**

- Nine (9) students with disabilities spoke, most about their positive experience with the GSIL Impactt program and concerns about the program not being there for other students, like them who could benefit from these services
- Two additional Impactt Staff spoke about Impactt
- One individual noted that she felt it was troubling there is no clear plan for pre-ets spending.
- Several individuals expressed their concerns as to how the decisions being made are going to impact students and youth with disabilities.
- A couple of individuals expressed concern about VR providing services to students with disabilities without staff to provide those services (referencing VR and GSIL staff layoffs)

### **Concerns around Order of Selection**

- A couple of individuals expressed their concerns that once you are in an order of selection you never come out
- One individual thought the Agency should relook at the categories and come up with better criteria

**Concerns around financial:**

- The question was asked if notices of layoffs have been given to staff. The DOE Communication Director indicated that to date no one has been laid off and that the Dept was looking at attrition and other options. This met with some controversy from two staff who were present and believe they are being laid off and have a termination date. One meeting participant noted that If the Agency cannot get it right as to whether or not staff have been laid off, how can they trust the other information.
- One individual stated that there has been no independent verification of revised numbers from the Department of Ed. They followed up with that line of questioning with: Why is the DOE rushing for layoffs before verifying numbers?
- A couple of individual expressed concerns that the administration points to the previous financial administrator and are not taking responsibility.

**General Service Provision:**

- One individual asked: why there is a difference between VR offices being open to serving customers. He has personally found a great difference between working with the VR Manchester office and Concord Office. Feels there should be more consistency.
- One individual shared her concern that VR staff do not have a good understanding of customized employment
- One individual shared her concern that job coaches could not be provided if a parent found the job for their child.

**Recommendations:**

- Look to the State for surplus money to save student programming \$99M. Also --The DOE has lapse money it can cover the program – required to have a lapse which would cover cited – NH-RSA 9-1 line item transfer. Request to legislature for ability to transfer.
- The Agency should look at how services are provided and provide services in a cost effective manner
- Look for ways to talk to and engage families. Enlist the families' help to look for and identify solutions; ask what works and what doesn't work. May be able to save money if stop activities that do not work
- Provide relevant information
- Develop a clear plan to get out of the Order of Selection with a timeline
- Develop a clear plan for spending the 15% set aside for Pre-employment transition services

**Questions:**

- Will the Department put out monthly reports on wait list including who is on them within each category and how long they have been waiting?
- What are plans to fix issues, especially around natural supports? (relative to supported employment and not specifically the order of selection)
- Will programs like Project Search and Impactt continue?
- 1) what % of total service from VR are outsourced to vendors and 2) is there a projected % of services that will continue to be outsourced to vendors
- Is Project Search going to be affected?
- Why are we cutting programs that are helping kids before other programs? VR Should not cut the Impact Program as it is hurting a lot of kids.
- What is the process and intent of the DOE to answer the questions asked today?
- Is this a done deal? Is the Agency in an Order of Selection? Are they definitely going into an order on Monday?