

Monday, February 12, 2018

From: Jason Parsons

To: Office of the Arizona Governor, Arizona State Senator Nancy Barto, Arizona State Representative Kelli Butler and Jasmine Snipes (Legislative Administrative Assistant to Representatives Kelli Butler and Mitzi Epstein)

CC: Member of the Arizona State Legislature not mentioned above, the media outlets of Phoenix, AZ. and all US Citizens that will be reading with on social media.

Subject: Follow up to my December 4, 2017 letter

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On December 4, 2017, I contacted the Arizona State Legislature, Office of the Arizona Governor and the local media asking for assistance with a problem that I was having with Voc-Rehab. Not only did I get the assistance that I needed so I could gain employment for the first time since I was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 40 in 2009, but an entire chain of events was set in motion that has presented me with more options for the improvement of the quality of life for those with disabilities than is common knowledge.

On January 20th, I went in detail about this chain of events during my monthly Autism discussion group that I host at my church, Lutheran Church of the Master. The meeting was recorded and posted on my website: www.aacphoenix.com as "I Finally Got A Job." This video not only tells of all the obstacles that I had to overcome, but it also lays out a strategy for overhauling how social services, including disability employment, is done in America.

Now I want to use the heart of this letter to express my sincere thanks to two individuals and a government entity, all of whom are at the state government level, whose meaningful response to my call for assistance needs to be recognized for various reasons.

Jasmine "KB" Snipes: When I was finally able to deliver the December 4th letter on Friday, December 8th, I showed up at the exact time that the Legislative Administrative Assistants were all at an appreciation lunch, so I was not able to speak in person to the three from my legislative district. I therefore had to wait until the following Monday to call them on the phone and made contact with Ms. Snipes at 9:46. At 10:36, a liaison from Voc-Rehab contacted me to get more information about my case, then contacted me again at 1:59 to inform me that the matter had been resolved and the documentation I needed would be put in the mail the next day. In short, it took her 4 hours and 13 minutes to resolve my situation.

Since I started my job, I have been training to use the US Department of State's database, "Knowledge Base" ("KB" for short). It enables us to provide passport assistance identical to what Ms. Snipes provided me, someone who actually had right answer. One of the biggest problems when dealing with government bureaucracies is those who need answers are run around in circles. Their employees may have extensive knowledge about what their departments do, but they have little more than hearsay understanding of what other departments do (a prime example of this was discussed in the January 20th video). So, they not only waste the time of those who are needing assistance, but also the time the government employees who are having to deal with an additional workload that should have never been sent their way in the first place. Wasting their time wastes taxpayers' money. Creating a database for state agencies similar to the USDS's "KB" would save everyone's time and the taxpayers' money.

Senator Nancy Barto: Contacted me to find out if my situation had been resolved and to schedule a phone interview with me to listen to my assessment of Voc-Rehab, even though I do not reside in her district. After sending her a PDF of an updated outline on a series of presentations I did back in 2016, "Getting Autistics/Aspies Jobs and Off Public Assistance," we had a very good discussion on January

9th. I shared the content of that discussion on the January 20th video, as well as more information that fixed what many might consider to be the biggest weakness of my plan, or was it?

The USDS contracts out to Peckham Inc to run the call centers, whom you must have a verifiable disability to work for. There are a few exceptions for reasons that I will not go into, but all of those who provide us with direct support have been diagnosed with various. This validates my position that not all our needs have to be handled by someone with master's degree, and we can be effective in helping in the personal and professional development of others with disabilities. This concept could lead to us being assisted in a manner that not just more cost efficient, but more efficient period.

Nevertheless, for those who do not feel comfortable with caseworks who have no professional certification, the method of addressing that concern that I brought up in the video was to such individual to get certified as "Peer Support Specialists." This is an option have been presented to me by Voc-Rehab and/or "Focus Employment Service," who was fully aware of me being an Autistic self-advocate. Even before then, Sam Bartlow, the youth supervisor for AZ ASSIST, who should have gotten such certification before we me met in 2009. The fact that I did not learn about this option until Melanie Marraffa, Employment Specialist, Ticket to Work, Beacon Group, told me about it on January 15th should lead taxpayers to question what is wrong with the status quo means of working with Autistics.

As the chairwomen of the Arizona Senate Health and Human Services Committee, Senator Barto can call one or more Arizona Senate hearing on all the matters brought up during my phone interview with her, as well as in the video and this letter in order that they can all be address in a public forum.

Office of the Arizona Governor: Although I was contact by someone for this department to inform me that my situation had been resolved several days after it had been, I genuinely do appreciate the fact that they did take the time to look into the matter for me. However, the governor can do something that Senator Barto cannot do, order the directors of DDD and DES to take my suggestions seriously. I am not expecting anyone to allow me to dictate policies to them, but I believe that they can gain insight into the problems by listening to those who have to deal with the consequences of those problem.

Office of the Arizona Governor and Arizona State Legislature: I am encouraging all parties who have the ability to take action in these matters to take the time and effort to not only understand what makes Peckham and Beacon different from their competitors, but to compare the results. Who clients of comparable functionality have the highest median wage, the lowest dependency on public assistance, reach the most mile stones before leaving their program, etc.

Although Peckham has numerous contracts in Iowa and Michigan, the only contract they have locally his to the USDS's passport call center. However, we have been told that they are bidding on more. I do not know if any are specifically with the state of Arizona, but if they are, you would be wise to take a closer look at how they do business better than their competitors and just give them the contracts. Beacon Group should be the only contracted vender providing employment assistance to the disable at this time.

Sincerely,

Jason Parsons
[Address & phone # redacted from this social media version.]
aacphoenix@outlook.com

P.S.: I will be posting a redacted PDF copy of this letter, as well as the updated outline of "Getting Autistics/Aspies Jobs and Off Public Assistance," on social media and at www.aacphoenix.com