

LAWSUITS ARE CHALLENGING SHELTERED WORKSHOPS



There are thousands of disabled individuals in Oregon who are, unfortunately, stuck separately in dead end types of jobs at the sheltered workshops. The reason they are stuck in these jobs is because the state programs, which are designed to help these individuals find mainstream types of employment, have failed. There is now a lawsuit that has been filed. The sheltered workshops, which are also known as work activity programs, are typically funded by the state and are nonprofit organizations that are designed to help disabled individuals find employment which allows them to perform simple tasks that they can easily get done, even with their disability. A number of the workers within these sheltered workshops are not even paid the minimum wage for the United States. Sheltered workshops were initially designed to be much like a stepping stone to help disabled individuals land better jobs, especially in a job market that is currently competitive because of the economy, which is still in a recovery process. However, many critics believe that these workshops are not helping disabled individuals and are instead exploiting them. Critics say that these workshops are basically saying that those who are disabled are unable to do real work, which is entirely untrue, as there are many disabled individuals who are perfectly capable of getting an average job done. The class-action lawsuit has been brought on by the Cerebral Palsy Association's Oregon chapter, along with eight disabled individuals who suffer from both intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities. It is the first lawsuit to take place in any state within the United States, according to Michael Bailey, who is the president for the National Disability Rights Network. The lawsuit was filed in Portland, Oregon. The reason for this is because Oregon was once the leading state within the entire nation in which provided special training services designed specifically for disabled individuals as a means of helping them find employment in which they would earn minimum wage and possibly even more than that. However, the lawsuit claims that since the end of the 90's and into the millennium, Oregon has completely reversed and relies heavily on segregated workshops that do not support the disabled individuals in a way that allows them to find the employment they deserve. As of right now, there are nearly 2,300 disabled individuals who are in sheltered workshops in the state of Oregon. Of these individuals, the vast majority are stuck in dead end facilities that do not allow them to interact properly or socially and do not help them to find jobs that are at or above minimum wage which is simply unfair. Michael Bailey says, "We filed this lawsuit in Oregon because they know how to do it and have done it before." He concluded by saying, "Oregon has a history of doing this right."

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