



Commonwealth of Virginia
Officer of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER FORTY SIX (2015)

SUPPORTING VIRGINIANS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE NEW VIRGINIA ECONOMY

Importance of the Issue

In the New Virginia Economy there is a need for qualified workers, including those with disabilities. The Commonwealth's vocational rehabilitation programs, administered by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) and the Department of Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), annually assist more than 4,000 clients with securing jobs in businesses like Amazon, The Hershey Company, and Bon Secours Health System. These workers not only meet the demands placed on them by their employers, but inspire their coworkers and positively impact the corporate culture and workplace behaviors of all employees. Yet, not enough job seekers with disabilities find full-time, competitively-waged jobs and not enough young people with disabilities find career pathways through education or training that lead to full-time, competitively-waged jobs.

It is the policy of this Commonwealth, as set forth in §51.5-1 of the *Code of Virginia*, "to encourage and enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and to engage in remunerative employment." Yet, according to the 2014 Disability Statistics Annual Report, only 35.3% of Virginians with disabilities were employed in 2013, while 77.9% of Virginians without a disability were employed during the same time period. All qualified workers in Virginia must be given the same opportunities to seek and gain employment and utilize their talents in growing our economy.

Establishment of the Initiative

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to §2.2-103 of the *Code of Virginia*, and consistent with my Executive Order 23, I hereby direct the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, serving as my Chief Workforce Development Advisor, to take the following immediate actions:

1. The Chief Workforce Development Advisor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, shall work with DARS and DBVI to offer to all executive branch agencies (including institutions of higher education, boards, and commissions) training designed to expand existing efforts to recruit, accommodate, retain and advance Virginians with disabilities in the Commonwealth's workforce. Training shall commence no later than October 1, 2015, and will address:

- Identifying and creating career pathway opportunities for Virginians with disabilities, including mentoring opportunities, workplace learning, and paid internships that build on acquired workforce credentials;
- Using assistive technology and supportive employment to promote employment of individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth in integrated settings and for competitive wages; and
- Using §2.2-4344.A.1.b of the *Code of Virginia* to directly purchase goods and services from Virginia's Employment Service Organizations that employ Virginians with disabilities.

2. The Chief Workforce Development Advisor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, shall work with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) to develop strategies to enhance the DBHDS Employment First Strategic Plan no later than December 1, 2015. DBHDS shall issue an initial progress report to the Chief Workforce Development Advisor no later than July 1, 2016, and subsequent progress reports by July 1st each year thereafter.

3. The Chief Workforce Advisor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, shall work with DARS and DBVI to develop a strategy, no later than November 1, 2015, to promote and incentivize the hiring of qualified Virginians with disabilities by new and existing Virginia businesses and companies seeking to relocate to the Commonwealth.

4. The Chief Workforce Advisor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Administration, shall work with the Department of General Services to develop a strategy, no later than November 1, 2015, to increase the use by state agencies of the purchasing exemption provided in §2.2-1118 of the *Code of Virginia* to purchase goods and non-professional services from Employment Services Organizations that employ individuals with disabilities.

5. The Chief Workforce Development Advisor shall prepare and deliver a report to the governor no later than December 31, 2015, and each December 31st thereafter, detailing compliance with this Executive Order and providing performance metrics from the prior fiscal year.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 27th day of July, 2015.

Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

Levar M. Stoney, Secretary of the Commonwealth