



U.S. AbilityOne Commission Statement on the National Council on Disability 2024 Progress Report

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 6, 2024 – The National Council on Disability (NCD) issued a [“National Disability Policy: A Progress Report, 2024”](#) on October 31, 2024, reaffirming NCD’s 2020 recommendation that the AbilityOne Program be phased out over a period of eight years and be replaced with a legislative mandate that all federal contractors hire some minimum percentage of people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

While NCD acknowledged four of the substantive regulations and policies issued by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission in the past three years to transform the AbilityOne Program, it did not address or acknowledge other substantive actions the Commission has taken to strengthen governance, increase transparency, improve oversight of CNAs and NPAs, enhance employee rights and employee career development, and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders.

Instead, NCD stated that these policies simply align with some of NCD’s interim recommendations in its 2020 report and that these changes provide no basis for revisiting its 2020 recommendation to phase out the AbilityOne Program. As NCD explained:

“...NCD made clear in [its 2020] report that the interim recommendations were only contextually appropriate during the phaseout of the AbilityOne program, and implementation of any NCD interim recommendations does not negate our recommendation to phase out the AbilityOne program. Recent updates to the AbilityOne program do not address the underlying structural problems and incompatibility of the AbilityOne program with modern disability policy.”

The Commission understands that NCD has an established system for deciding when to undertake a new report that may offer the Council additional information. However, the Commission is disappointed that NCD reaffirmed its 2020 recommendation that the AbilityOne Program is incompatible with modern disability policy without conducting new fact-finding regarding the Program, without interviewing members of the AbilityOne Commission or its professional staff to understand the progress that has been made toward modernizing the Program, and without engaging the procurement community to understand the impact of NCD’s recommendation on federal agencies if the Program is phased out.



Over the last four years, the Commission has worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders to modernize key aspects of the Program. The work the Commission has done, and other efforts underway, offer the opportunity to address concerns raised by many different stakeholders including NCD. NCD's Progress Report was an unfortunate missed opportunity to align an all-of-government approach to increase the number and quality of jobs available to people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

While timing and resources for a full new research engagement are up to NCD, we call upon them to interview members of the Commission and its professional staff to gather facts that might inform a different decision regarding the inherent structure and outcomes of the Program. Data regarding the quality of the jobs, the promotion opportunities, and the career development currently being offered to thousands of people who are blind or have significant disabilities who are working on sophisticated and necessary federal government contracts should inform any assessment by NCD of the utility of the AbilityOne Program.

Additionally, NCD should engage the procurement community to understand the critical role that the AbilityOne Program plays in the ability of federal agencies to meet their complex mission requirements. We believe that a result of such engagement would be an updated set of recommendations that would identify opportunities to better leverage the procurement system, would help the AbilityOne Commission continue its modernization efforts, and would help bring other related efforts to the table. With appropriate attention and modernization, the AbilityOne Program will not only align with modern disability policy, but will be a driver of excellent employment opportunities across this country for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

About the U.S. AbilityOne Commission

The AbilityOne Program is administered by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, the operating name of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled. The Commission is an independent federal agency composed of 15 Presidential appointees: 11 represent federal agencies, and four serve as private citizens who are knowledgeable about employment barriers facing people who are blind or have significant disabilities.

About the AbilityOne Program

The AbilityOne Program facilitates the use of government procurement to provide employment in the United States for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Approximately 37,000 individuals, including more than 2,500 veterans, are employed nationwide at more than 420 nonprofit agencies from Maine to Guam. AbilityOne provided more than \$4.1 billion in products and services to approximately 40 federal government agencies in FY 2023.

Contact media2@abilityone.gov.