

Chairman Nelson and committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak on DARS employment services.

DARS employment services should serve everyone, not just people with one type of disability. I was turned away from seeking a summer job, across ten years, and not provided any paperwork saying why. DARS saw my quadriplegia and offered ridiculous excuses, such as:

- If you get rides from others you are unreliable.
- If you count on an attendant in the bathroom you are unreliable.
- If your high school didn't employ you last winter, you can't do employment in the summer.
- Since you found yourself a Saturday job, DARS can't find you a whole job.
- You lack stamina if you are only working on Saturdays.
- Because you found that Saturday job yourself, supported employment is not available
- During spring semester you had an education goal, not a work goal; so you can't have a second goal and seek summer employment ahead of time.

I have been accused of being unreliable, low on stamina, lacking potential, and thus unworthy of job placement services, so let me fill you in with the truth:

- I took eight AP classes in high school and earned a distinguished diploma.
- Four years later, I earned a triple major from Southwestern University and began seminary.
- For two summers, I volunteered for a State Representative's election campaign, making calls full-time in his call center.

Obviously my quadriplegia doesn't get entirely in the way of so much hard work.

I need DARS' expertise to correctly explain disability in an interview. I need a full resume! If someone can't do physical work, it is somehow your fault, not DARS fault, and they don't work with you.

Here are my recommendations:

- Texas should be more person-centered so that all are employed.
- Texas should create new categories of jobs.
- Stop thinking 'how can we immediately close this case'.
- Possibly the CILS, DADS, or the TWC should replace DARS, to reduce the negativity.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. May I answer any questions?