

Walgreens entered the Ticket to Work Program in 2007 as an Employment Network during our significant increase of proactively hiring people with disabilities. We entered the program because we hoped it would help strengthen our ongoing initiatives and efforts to be a good inclusive employer. As I stated in my testimony, our requirements for participating were contingent on the administrative burden of the program and weighing the benefits to our workforce. Since Walgreens' initial involvement in the Ticket to Work Program, several new requirements have resulted in the unintended consequence of increased administrative costs to Walgreens, making it challenging to maintain our status as an EN. One example of this is a recent request for IWPs to be accompanied with a summary of the past six months of wages for the ticket holder prior to Ticket assignment. As an employer, we would not have access to that information except in the rare instance that the ticket holder had previously worked for us. The most recent change to our contract with SSA (now a Blanket Purchase Agreement) is another example of additional administrative burden that has made it difficult to maintain our status as an Employment Network. One would assume that these program enhancements are part of the agency's continuous efforts to increase quality control mechanisms for the program. However, since we have a 100 percent employment rate for our ticket holders at wages above Substantial Gainful Activity and the Break Even Point, it seems unnecessary for us.

The good news is that with every potential barrier we have encountered, good communication with leadership at the SSA provided us with a solution to enable us to stay engaged in the program. We are pleased to be able to offer employment opportunities to people with disabilities, especially those who are SSI recipients and SSDI beneficiaries and thank you for your continued support of our efforts.