**Bottom Dollars/ A Rooted in Rights Documentary (Cynthia Austin, CVUHSD)**

**See the Trailer:** [**http://www.rootedinrights.org/videos/employment/bottom-dollars/**](http://www.rootedinrights.org/videos/employment/bottom-dollars/)

When the Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938, it included a revolutionary civil rights protection: a minimum wage. American workers could no longer be exploited for their hard work – with one huge exception. Section 14(c) of the Act included an exemption allowing some workers, people with disabilities, to be paid less than minimum wage.

This provision was originally designed to persuade employers to hire people with disabilities and open up opportunities. Instead, people with disabilities were often employed in “sheltered workshops,” segregated workplaces away from their communities, earning sub-minimum wage.  78 years later, 14(c) remains in effect.

In 2016, nearly 250,000 people are legally paid less than the minimum wage, on average, less than $2 an hour.  **“Bottom Dollars” is an hour-long documentary that exposes the exploitation of people with disabilities through personal stories and expert interviews.** It also presents clear employment alternatives with competitive wages and community inclusion.

Do we want all people to have a shot at a job for fair pay in their own communities, or do we want some people to be separated, exploited and robbed of their chance to seize the American dream for themselves?

<http://www.rootedinrights.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/10/BottomDollarsDiscussionGuide_09_>

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**Discussion Questions:**

1. In what ways are segregated workplaces harmful?

2. How can we ensure better access to transition programs for students with disabilities?

3. What can you do in your state to end the sub-minimum wage?

4. What can the federal government do to end segregation and low wages for people with disabilities in the workplaces?

5. How could money be re-directed from segregated workplaces to more inclusive programs?

6. What can employers do if they discover that they currently use the services of a sheltered workshop or employ individuals at sub-minimum wage?

7. How can employers recruit more employees with disabilities?

8. What can employers do to build a more inclusive and integrated work environment?

9. How can employers using supported employment be sure that they are not inadvertently furthering the exploitation of people with disabilities?

10. How can access to assistive technology open up job opportunities?

11. How can states begin the process of closing sheltered workshops and connecting their participants to other programs?

12. What can people with disabilities do if they want to challenge their wages?

13. What are some organizations that provide resources to people with disabilities seeking employment?

 **The sub-minimum wage is allowed in 48 states.**