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Feb. 12, 2016

RespectAbility – Public Comments – New Mexico Combined State Plan

“WHEREAS, October is recognized nationally as disability employment awareness month; and WHEREAS, the New Mexico Department of Health and the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have partnered with the University of New Mexico to create a program called "Partners for Employment" to advance promising practices for inclusive employment for people with intellectual disabilities in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, "Partners For Employment" collaborated with the University of New Mexico Anderson School of Management to conduct a study of New Mexico businesses and found that one of the barriers to employing people with disabilities is a general fear of the unknown; and WHEREAS, national research conducted by the Institute for Corporate Productivity found that companies hiring people with intellectual disabilities are rewarded with business benefits, including the addition of highly motivated and dependable employees who meet or exceed expectations; and

WHEREAS, "Partners for Employment" seeks to increase awareness and to encourage all businesses statewide to fully utilize the skills and talents that individuals with intellectual disabilities can bring to the workforce.” – [Governor Susana Martinez, Disability Employment Awareness Month Proclamation, September 16th, 2015.](#)

RespectAbility is pleased to submit the following comments regarding the current draft of the State of New Mexico’s Combined State Plan as required under Section 102 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We are pleased to have this opportunity to offer our comments, raise our questions, and provide our suggestions about the content of the state plan.

Today New Mexico has the opportunity to work hard to improve outcomes in terms of competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. Currently, New Mexico ranks 26th in the country in terms of their employment rate of people with disabilities. **Only 35.3% of the approximate 160,000 working age New Mexicans with disabilities are employed.** Further, there are over 9,900 youth ages 16-20 with disabilities, and each year a quarter of them will age out of school into an uncertain future.

Thanks to WIOA, New Mexico has the chance to invest resources in successful models and implement best practices to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. New Mexico has much to learn from other states that have worked hard to achieve improved employment outcomes. Other states have higher than 50% employment rates for their citizens with disabilities. [States like the Dakotas, Alaska, and Wyoming have achieved results by putting best practices into places.](#) The experience of these states shows ways that New Mexico can dramatically improve their outcomes. **Likewise, we are also seeing pockets of excellence around innovative youth programs designed to address disability employment in Georgia, Nevada, and Kentucky.**

To help the states succeed in this [process we developed a resource called the Disability Employment First Planning Tool.](#) This document details best practices and effective models. This toolkit contains models that are proven to work, be cost effective to implement, and

be successful. **We have developed an extensive collection of data on disability and employment in New Mexico.** That information is attached to our comments.

From our review of New Mexico's Combined State Plan, it is clear that many of the critical ingredients necessary for empowering more people with disabilities to pursue the American Dream are already in place. From an engaged Governor to a workforce system engaging job seekers with employment barriers to partnership programs focused on the capacity building and employer engagement, the pieces are in place for the state to rapid achieve improved outcomes. We commend the state for the level of detail and strong commitments made to universal accessibility across the workforce system.

However, no plan is perfect. There are several critical issues that need to be addressed in order to fully align the systems needs to move this paradigm shift forward and to meet the requirements of the new WIOA legislation. For example, while there is a fantastic level of data and detail in the state plan on disability, there is no commiserate commitment to using that data for performance metrics. While the plan does well describe growing elements of New Mexico's economy, people with disabilities are not viewed as an untapped labor resource to meet talent demands in health care, social assistance, accommodation or technology careers. While there some great links and commitments around transitions for youth, especially those with disabilities, those commitments lack discussion of critical factors such as certain gaps in post-secondary education or investing in school to work transition programs.

As such, our public comments on New Mexico's WIOA State Plan are structured around those points where greater clarity, precision, and data are needed to ensure that people with disabilities will be better equipped to pursue the American Dream. From the accessibility of the workforce system to employer engagement to investing in transition programs for youth with disabilities, our comments are intended to help the New Mexico push hard to see improved integrated employment outcomes for its citizens with disabilities.

1. Ensure that the best data points, including the Labor Force Participation Rates of people with disabilities vs. those without disabilities, are used as performance metrics:

Saying that "what gets measured, gets done" may be a cliché but it still captures an essential truth. Achieving success, especially through the implementation of WIOA, will very much depend on having access to the right data to drive the decision making process. **There is a 34.8-point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates between people with and without disabilities in New Mexico.** This gap has critical implications for the WIOA work being done in your state. **Not only does this data need to be included directly in the Workforce Analysis sections of the State Plan and such data needs to propel the design of your performance metrics.** That said, there is a great level of detail included in some areas of New Mexico's Combined State Plan.

As required by Section 102(b)(1)(B) of WIOA, each state plan must include "an analysis of the current workforce, employment and unemployment data, labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities)." New Mexico satisfies the latter clause of this requirement on page 33 of the Combined State Plan.

In this section, the State Plan reports on the size, employment status, and labor force participation of New Mexico's disability community. Such data points are critical if New Mexico's workforce system is to align and train people to overcome the barriers to employment created by disability. Further, the State Plan is to be commended for including a detailed table

that explores **Employment Status by Disability Type, New Mexico, 2011 – 2013**. Disability is not a monolithic experience and it is vital to recognize the heterogeneity of disability. Indeed, the accommodations needed for someone with an ambulatory difference to succeed in the workplace as very different from the employment supports needed to ensure someone with a cognitive difference can be successful. Given the flexibility and availability of assistive technology solutions, the employment rate for this subgroup should be much higher. Many people who are blind or deaf have incredible talent potential that can be unleashed by something as simple as a smartphone. With these differences in mind, we have several recommendations to make.

First, it is imperative that the workforce system and the State Board include the labor force participation rates of people with disabilities on both in their performance metrics and on their state dashboards. The deep detail included in both the Economic Analysis and Workforce Analysis of the Combined State Plan shows that state leaders in New Mexico have access to the right data points and labor market information. However, looking at unemployment information in isolation causes decision makers to miss the bigger picture of those individuals with barriers to employment who are not actively seeking work. Additionally, while it is important to see when and if a person who approaches the workforce system gets a job, it is even better when systems can be created that enable people to get jobs and careers on their own **There is a 34.8-point gap in the Labor Force Participation Rates between people with and without disabilities in New Mexico. Pushing hard to close this gap will require focused energy and effort.** [As an example of the data that is needed, we are including a link to, and a copy of, the presentation our organization has compiled about employment for New Mexicans with disabilities.](#)

Second, as we stated in the opening sections of our public comments, New Mexico currently ranks 26th in the nation in terms of the employment rate for people with disabilities. Even so, it is highly illustrative to look at the experience of those with disabilities who are succeeding in the world of work. **From the data, we find that only 37.3% of the 12,600 New Mexicans who are blind or have vision loss are employed while 45% of the 18,400 with hearing differences are also employed. Sadly, we also see that only 23.2% of New Mexicans with intellectual or developmental disabilities are employed.** For this demographic, workforce solutions may take more time and resources. **However, there will be a considerable return on investment if New Mexico's workforce system expands successful school to work transition programs.** New Mexico has already begun to establish Project Search sites creating career pathways for youth with disabilities. However, there is a considerable need to expand the number, scope, and diversity of such sites. We have more to say on this point later in our public comments.

2. Strong Sector Strategies- The need for strategic alignment of workforce development and economic development to expand employment for people with disabilities:

The Combined State Plan accurately reports that “60 percent” of people with disabilities in New Mexico “did not participate in the labor force.” Sadly, only 35.3% of people with disabilities are employed while 70.1% of people without disabilities are employed in New Mexico. The most effective way of beginning to close that gap will be to train and prepare people with disabilities for careers in those sectors of New Mexico's economy that are rapidly expanding and/or where there is high turnover. After all, WIOA is supposed to be an employer-driven paradigm shift and expanding the opportunities needed to overcome barriers to employment requires strong partnerships with employers in growing industries.

The “Projected Employment Growth in New Mexico’s Industries” included on page 5 of the Combined State Plan clearly points the way forward in terms of building employer partnerships and designing sector strategies. This section of the plan reports that “Employment growth in each of four industries is projected to comprise over 10 percent of net growth over the projection period.” The growing industries are: “health care and social assistance with 29,490 more jobs” accounting for an impressive “29.0 percent of net projected growth.” Educational, accommodation, food services, and retail complete the list of top New Mexico industries with growing demand.

Further the State Plan later goes on in even greater detail, distinguishing between growth and replacements as well as distinguishing between “Large Occupations” and “Fast-Growing Occupations.” When it comes to thinking about ways to expanding economic opportunities for people with disabilities in New Mexico, we highly encourage the state workforce system to give special attention to the “Detailed Occupations with the Greatest and Fastest Growth” on page 16. The jobs gains in these sectors offer a great opportunity for focused sector strategies improve employment outcomes among people with disabilities in New Mexico. We submit that these are job sectors where people with disabilities can excel and benefit their employer’s bottom line. People with disabilities represent an untapped labor resource that, with the right training and supports, can meet the diverse talent needs of New Mexico’s growing job sectors. Below, we offer our specifics ideas on how to implement such efforts:

A. Health and Elder Care

The State Plan makes clear that healthcare is one of the greatest areas of growing demand in the economy of New Mexico. For example, look at the number of jobs as “Personal Care Aides” and “Home Health Aides” that are projected between 2012-2022, 51 percent and 45 percent growth respectively.

As with many states, the growing talent needs of employers in this sector is propelled by demographics and aging. Demand for workers in the field of health care more acute as Baby Boomers age. This is at once a challenge for New Mexico’s workforce system and an opportunity for New Mexico’s disability community. **People with disabilities can and should be part of the solution to this critical demand in the labor market.** To quote [a 2014 report from the Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#), “[people with disabilities] not only represent an untapped talent pool, but also offer significant value and insight” in the field of healthcare. Indeed, it is important for healthcare institutions to reflect their customers, and people with disabilities interface more with the healthcare system. There are [numerous examples of young people with disabilities doing incredible work in the fields of healthcare, elder care, and in assisted living](#). **Employers working in health and elder care can greatly benefit from the loyalty, dedication, and retention rates of employees with disabilities.**

Other states have had incredible success creating training programs for young people with disabilities. [New Mexico launched its first Project Search site in 2014.](#) However, there is a chance through WIOA and the Combined State Plan for New Mexico to invest substantially in this cost effective program. Nationally, each year approximately 2,700 young people with disabilities, spread out in 45 states, do a nine-month, school-to-work Project Search program that takes place entirely at the workplace. This innovative, business-led model features total workplace immersion, which facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and worksite-based training.

Project Search sites overall have been achieving outstanding results for people with disabilities, employers, and taxpayers alike. For example, [the first longitudinal study of the program, which was conducted in upstate New York, found “a 68% success rate in transitioning students from high school into competitive employment” and “Project SEARCH sites...New York that have an impressive 83% success rate overall.”](#) The goal for each program participant is competitive employment.

Given the funding and service imperatives in WIOA around youth, disabilities, and sector strategies, New Mexico has an opportunity to invest heavily in the Project Search model as it will provide optimum performance metrics and save considerable tax money in the future. Many more Project Search sites would be a great channel for collaborative energies of the workforce system to coalesce around meeting a growing labor need with an untapped labor resource. As such, we highly recommend that New Mexico look to learn from other states that have had rewarding experiences with Project Search. New Mexico should look for ways to scale up Project Search quickly and efficiently. We highly encourage you to learn from Wisconsin which has rapidly expanded its network of Project Search sites. The experiences of the dedicated state officials, VR counselors, workforce professionals, and special educators from Wisconsin offer profound insights into how make this cost-effective model a success. We encourage New Mexico to look at Project Search and other such programs which will save big money for taxpayers while also strengthening the talent pool for employers.

B. Accommodation, Food Preparation, and Hospitality as a sector for employees with disabilities to shine:

[For all jobs earning less than \\$50,000 per year, the average cost of replacing one employee is between \\$6,000 and \\$20,000.](#) Research shows that employees with disabilities, when their interests and abilities are aligned with the needs of employers, are more productive and loyal than their non-disabled peers. Company records show that even when the relatively more expensive accommodations were factored in, the overall costs of disability accommodations were far outweighed by the low turnover rates and better tenures of the employees with disabilities.

As such, we encourage New Mexico’s workforce system to look at ways to train people with disabilities to be successful in the hospitality industry. Accommodations and food service are extremely high turnover jobs and numerous studies show that people with disabilities can be outstanding in those fields and have significantly higher employer loyalty.

An outstanding example of the type of work needed is found in Missouri. As part of the Poses Family Foundation’s Workplace Initiative, a coalition of employment service providers has launched a successful training and placement program with the hospitality sector in St. Louis. This training runs for up to 12 weeks, and takes place on site at the hotel; all participants are paid by the hotel for the duration of training. Since the summer of 2015, two cohorts of trainees have completed training at the Hyatt Regency. Trainees have gone on to permanent employment at the Hyatt and other hotel partners in a range of departments—culinary; auditing; and customer service. This type of training and Poses’ Workplace Initiative could easily be part of your overall Sector Strategies.

Likewise, in other states, [hotels and other hospitality employers have found Project SEARCH to be an amazing source of talent. The work done by Embassy Suites and David Scott in Omaha, Nebraska offers valuable lessons that can enable New Mexico to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.](#) New Mexico’s State Board, along with other

components of the workforce system, should connect with employers in the hospitality sector to begin figuring out how to benefit from these models.

C. Capitalize on the Autism Advantage in STEM jobs:

On page 48, the State Plan reports that “The educational attainment of New Mexico’s labor force may be adequately suited to the current demands of the state’s employers.” While the number of individuals with post-secondary degree may be adequate now, investing in higher educational attainment outcomes will make New Mexico more competitive. As the State Plan says, “states with workforces that are highly educated will have a competitive advantage in attracting new employers, especially those in industries related to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).” As New Mexico looks at this issue, we encourage you not to exclude people with disabilities from this talent pipeline. **In fact, as has been documented in many cases, disability can sometime be a real asset in the STEM space. There can be an “Autism Advantage” in the STEM space. Indeed, some people on the Autism spectrum can have the very best skills in science, math and engineering.** [Microsoft](#), [SAP](#), and [Specialisterne](#) have committed themselves to “[provide employment opportunities for people on the autism spectrum in roles such as software testers, programmers, system administrators, and data quality assurance specialists.](#)” [The Israeli Defense Forces recruits and trains their citizens on the Autism spectrum for work in their elite intelligence unit.](#) As Carol Glazer of the National Organization on Disability said, writing earlier this year in *Huffington Post*, “[America is already lagging when it comes to STEM-skilled workers. The U.S. will have more than 1.2 million job openings in STEM fields by 2018.](#)”

Federal contractors and other employers have huge demands for STEM qualified talents. However, many schools place their best supports for students with disabilities in schools that do not have strong STEM training. This is a huge loss as people on the Autism Spectrum, for example, can have the very best skills in science, math and engineering. [Microsoft](#), [SAP](#), and [Specialisterne](#) have committed themselves to “[provide employment opportunities for people on the autism spectrum in roles such as software testers, programmers, system administrators, and data quality assurance specialists.](#)” These experiences and partnerships offer insights into how to challenge employer perceptions, recruit diverse talent, and ultimately put people to work. Delaware’s Governor Jack Markell has led the way in partnering with companies to employ more people on the autism spectrum. Such examples need to be implemented by New Mexico. **This issue of STEM and access for student with disabilities is a natural point of partnership between the workforce system and the educational system. That work needs to start young, be matched with high expectations for success, and work to ensure people with disabilities have the chance to become future scientists, engineers, and mathematicians.**

Partnerships should be created with federal contractors who have 503 requirements and talent shortages. On the Section 503 front, several cities in New Mexico play host to the operations of Lockheed Martin, Los Alamos National Security LLC, URS Corp., The Regents of the University of California, New Mexico Technology Group LLC. Through WIOA, New Mexico has the opportunity to really innovate in helping these dynamic businesses meet and exceed their Section 503 requirements.

D. Jobs with state government and state contracting can also be sources of opportunity:

While the focus of our comments on New Mexico's Combined State Plan are around aligning the workforce system to create opportunities for New Mexicans with disabilities in the private sector, public sector employment should not be neglected. In the year ahead, the workforce of New Mexico's state government is likely to be impacted by the cresting wave of Baby Boomers retiring just as other sectors are being shaken.

As such, adopting affirmative actions to hire people with disabilities could be a solution to this coming challenge. Other states have adopted such steps as an opportunity measure in their state hiring policies. This was first discussed in Governor Markell's *Better Bottom Line* Initiative and later in RespectAbility's *Disability Employment First Planning* Toolkit. In Governor Markell's own words, "[One key action is to set a state goal for hiring people with disabilities through an executive order and hold agencies accountable for achieving that goal.](#)"

New Mexico should explore the feasibility of Affirmative Action hiring of people with disabilities for jobs in state government plus expanding state contracting obligations similar to the model we see in Section 503 for Federal contractors. [Governor Inslee in Washington State](#) and [Governor Dayton in Minnesota](#) have been working to implement such measures for people with disabilities through executive orders. [Likewise, we are also seeing great success with governmental hiring of people with disabilities at the local level in Montgomery County Maryland.](#) The untapped potential of New Mexicans with disabilities is such that a full-spectrum, all-of-the-above-and-more approach is needed. While our priority is on seeing the talents of people with disabilities channeled into the private sector, employment opportunities in the public sectors shouldn't be over looked as part of the state's overall workforce strategy.

3. Make busting stigmas, myths, and misconceptions a key part of New Mexico's workforce strategy:

Low expectations and misconceptions are critical barriers to employment for people with disabilities. [A Princeton study shows that while people with disabilities are seen as warm, they are not seen as competent.](#) Similarly, [a study published by Cornell Hospitality Quarterly found that companies share a concern that people with disabilities cannot adequately do the work required of their employees.](#) Indeed, [the Center for Development and Disability at the University of New Mexico has been research this issue and fighting such misconceptions through their work on the "Partners for Employment" program.](#)

We therefore recommend that New Mexico's Combined State Plan be amended to include a comprehensive proactive communications/public relations strategy for reducing such stigmas. Indeed, we know that other groups of New Mexicans with barriers to work also face stigmas, especially those leaving the corrections system.

Indeed, the best way to fight stigmas is to let employers see the facts from other employers who are already succeeding by hiring people with disabilities. In terms of potential employer partners, we encourage your state plan to look at the [Disability Equality Index that assesses the inclusion and hiring efforts of major employers.](#) It was put together by the United States Business Leadership Network (USBLN) which operates [a network of affiliates across the country that can be an incredible resource for your work.](#) The companies which scored 100% in the USBLN index can be a great resource. These are Ameren Corporation, AT&T, Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., Capital One Financial Corporation, Comcast, NBC Universal, Ernst & Young LLP, Florida Blue, Freddie Mac, Highmark Health, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Lockheed Martin Corporation, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company,

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC), Procter & Gamble, Qualcomm Incorporated, Sprint Corporation, Starbucks Coffee Company, and TD Bank N.A.

Polls and focus groups show that there are three types of messages and audiences that are needed to expand employment for people with disabilities. Serious communications campaigns are needed for all three:

- A. CEOs/business leaders need to understand the value proposition/business case for their specific company as to why they should focus on putting people with disabilities into their talent pipelines.** This is best done through business-to-business success stories. Those businesses need to share their success stories and to talk about how people with disabilities can be extremely capable and loyal workers. While there are few Stephen Hawkings — with or without disabilities — people with disabilities can work highly successfully in hotels, healthcare, tend our parks and facilities, assist aging seniors, and be super talents in developing computer software and engineering solutions. CEOs and business leaders need to know that people with disabilities can be the BEST people to get a job done.
- B. Human resources professionals and on-the-ground supervisors need to understand that hiring people with disabilities is generally easy and inexpensive, and that any costs incurred are more than offset from increased loyalty.** Hiring managers and supervisors are key implementers who can turn high minded policy and business goals into action at the ground level. However, studies show that many of them are afraid of what they don't know about people with disabilities. They are afraid of potential legal action, costs, or other failures. For them, they need supports that will empower to overcome their own fears and to excel at recruiting, hiring, supervising or working with teammates with disabilities. New Mexico's VR staff and community agencies can fully support human resources professionals and managers in dealing with their own specific fears and stigmas surrounding hiring people with disabilities. Moreover, online and in-person training is readily available to help from a variety of sources. RespectAbility has online webinars, as [does ASKJAN.org](#), USDOL and others. Partners like [the Poses Family Foundation Workplace Initiative](#) can provide training to the workforce staff and volunteers systems-wide as well as to community agencies in supporting companies through messaging efforts around related to fear and stigma. [The National Organization on Disability](#) and [the U.S. Business Leadership Network](#) offer strong resources.
- C. People with disabilities and their families need high expectations. From the time of diagnosis, education for high expectations must begin. New Mexico's efforts need to be supported by a PR campaign that will inspire New Mexicans with disabilities to reach for the stars.** For example, Virgin Airways founder Sir [Richard Branson](#) and finance wizard [Charles Schwab](#) are dyslexic. Scientist Stephen Hawking and multi-billionaire businessman Sheldon Adelson, like Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas and President Franklin D. Roosevelt before them, are wheelchair/mobility device users. The CEO of Wynn Casinos, Steve Wynn, is legally blind. Arthur Young, co-founder of the giant EY (formerly Ernst & Young) was deaf. Success sells success and that is something the workforce system should seriously utilize in an intentional manner moving forward.

As example of the power and the value of making the business care for hiring people with disabilities, we offer Connecticut our insights gained from our #RespectTheAbility campaign. Our #RespectTheAbility, is a campaign focused on how hiring people with disabilities can make

organizations stronger and more successful. The campaign highlights the benefits to employers that look beyond the disability and imagine the possibility when hiring talented employees with disabilities. Our profiles of diverse employers such as [EY](#), [AT&T](#), and [Kwik Trip](#) offer insight in how to implement such a multilayered approach.

It is also critical that New Mexico VR staff and community agencies be prepared to support companies in dealing with their specific fears and stigmas. **Partners like the Poses Family Foundation Workplace Initiative can provide training to New Mexico VR staff as well as community agencies in supporting New Mexico companies through messaging efforts around related to fear and stigma.**

4. Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and Federal Contractors offer New Mexico the chance to innovate, collaborate, and expand opportunity:

While there is a great deal of detail in the current draft of New Mexico's Combined State Plan, there is also an omission. **Specifically, the State Plan lacks explicit references to the employment opportunities and talent challenges created by the Section 503 regulations and federal contractors.** [New Mexico's Plan does not discuss at all the new 7% utilization goal set for companies to recruit, hire, and retain qualified individuals with disabilities in all job categories.](#)

New Mexico needs to respond to the opportunity created by Section 503 with a strategy focused on competitive advantage, not just compliance. These regulations and requirements entail far more than just new rules for businesses to play by. **Section 503 is an opportunity that could potentially have a broad impact on the employer engagement work of the entire workforce system.** The companies who must comply with Section 503 have an opportunity to teach companies not impacted by the regulations how to effectively employ, engage, and retain workers or customers with disabilities.

5. Overcome the gap between disability services and career services in Post-Secondary Education:

There is a fundamental disconnect in most post-secondary education programs between disability services and careers. This is not a new issue and it is one that other organizations have raised in the past. However, with the priorities put into place by the implementation of WIOA, there is a historic opportunity to bridge this gap and to improve career and technical education for young people with and without differences. As formulated by the National Organization on Disability, at most educational institutions, "the career services office, which assists students in preparing for" the workforce ["lack a strong—or any—connection to the office of disabled student services, which ensures proper accessibility and accommodations on campus for students with disabilities."](#)

The result is a price we pay as a society is twofold. First, it costs employers who are unable to find qualified job candidates. Second, it costs students with disabilities who may be able to graduate with a degree thanks to accommodations but will go on to struggle to succeed in the working world. Nationally, there are 1.3 million young Americans ages 16-20 with disabilities. [They have high expectations to go into the workforce but currently only 53% of college graduates with disabilities are employed](#) as opposed to 84% of graduates with no disability. In total, only about 7% of people with disabilities will earn a college degree and less than half of the 2.3 million with a degree are employed.

Due to the mandate created by Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, federal contractors now have a utilization goal to make sure that 7% of their employees across all job groups be qualified people with disabilities. This regulation is actually a huge opportunity because companies are actively looking to hire recent graduates with disabilities. The first place for new recruits is college and campus recruiting. New Mexico has the chance to demonstrate to business that college students with disabilities are on campuses and that they should be actively targeting those with disabilities just as they do all other diversity recruiting on college campuses.

While the statistics cited above are national ones, they have bearing on the work that needs to be done through your community college system. Beyond just WIOA, community colleges are uniquely positioned to innovate in order to expand opportunity. Community colleges are very closely connected to the working world and the specific training requirements of employers. As you look to triangulate between employer needs, skills training, and recruiting workers; you will do well to remember the importance of getting students with disabilities connected to career services and prepared for the workplace early.

6. Ensure that Apprenticeship Programs Are Fully Accessible and Actively Recruiting Young People with Disabilities, Especially with Government Contractors:

We are pleased to see how seriously the Combined State Plan explores the issue of apprenticeships and commits resources to building on these programs as a career pathway. Specifically, on page 100, the Plan talks about “The Department of Workforce Solutions” as being “the State Apprenticeship Agency for New Mexico responsible for apprenticeship within the state.” This section then goes on to describe the “38 registered apprenticeship programs in New Mexico” and the “approximately 1,300 apprentices” being served by them. Further, most of these programs are “the building and construction trades.” These are critical steps and are steps that need to be fully accessible to people with disabilities in New Mexico.

Indeed, people with disabilities can be incredibly successful employees in such dynamic fields if given the structure, supports, and training an apprenticeship can offer. As such, we would direct your attention to two recommendations.

First, we highly encourage the workforce system in New Mexico to look at the hard work done by the federal Office of Disability Employment Policy around apprenticeships as a career pathway for young people with disabilities. ODEP has studies the challenges and generated resources which can open up these exciting programs to “youth and young adults with a full range of disabilities.” The regulations related to apprenticeship which have recently come out of the Department of Labor provide states the flexibility they need to refine and design training programs that maximally inclusive of people with diverse talents. We encourage you to invest time and energy to understand the best practices contained in ODEP’s apprenticeship toolkit.

Second, if they are not yet conversant on these issues, we highly recommend that the staff of New Mexico’s Vocational Rehabilitation be trained on the specifics of apprenticeship programs. Further, we would also highly recommend that VR staff connect and collaborate with the Federal officer responsible for apprenticeship programs in New Mexico.

Third, partnerships for apprenticeships and internship should be created with federal contractors who have 503 requirements and talent shortages. While construction is important, it should not be the only field fed by a talent pipe processed through an apprenticeship program. New Mexico could identify federal contractors with Section 503 requirements and have talent acquisition needs for partnership opportunities that can be win-win-win for employers, people

with disabilities and taxpayers alike. Placing programs like the highly successful Project SEARCH program at Federal contractors can be worthwhile for non-STEM jobs as well. Such innovative partnerships and improved accessibility are essential elements of realizing the full promise of WIOA for people with disabilities.

5. Prioritize pre-employment training and expand partnerships with VR

There are critical roles to be played by disparate elements of the system as a whole in New Mexico. As much as we would encourage New Mexico to invest WIOA funds in establishing Project Search programs to channel students with disabilities into health care and hospitality jobs, this is not the only paradigm that you should follow. The school system, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce boards can build creative, collaborative partnerships with companies that are leading on disability.

As you embark on your new strong collaborations, we encourage you to explore proven programs such as Amazon, UPS, and Pepsi. The global logistics companies UPS, at one of their busiest facilities, there is a training program dedicated to preparing youth with disabilities to succeed. Taking place in Louisville, KY, [The Transitional Learning Center is the result of a partnership between an employer, the school system, and vocational rehabilitation.](#) Pre-training programs are great because they offer the opportunity to train youth with disabilities in the soft skills they need to succeed and provide them with a foundation of work experience.

New Mexico should also look at other models of innovation that are showing great potential to fundamentally improve employment outcomes. To begin with, we would highly recommend that New Mexico examine how to support disability employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities. These types of partnerships could focus on the “cluster” model, started by Poses Family Foundation that is having tremendous success in diverse states as Nevada, Georgia, and Ohio. [This model depends on “consortium of employers committed to implement or expand programs”, “a public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers”, and “Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work.”](#)

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recommend that New Mexico examine how to support disability employment efforts through establishment of public/private partnerships in local communities. These types of partnerships could focus on the “cluster” model, started by Poses Family Foundation that is having tremendous success in diverse states as Nevada, Georgia, and Ohio. [This model depends on “consortium of employers committed to implement or expand programs”, “a public/private partnership to coordinate services for job-seekers with disabilities, with a single point of contact for employers”, and “Connections among employers, public and private agencies, and schools to reach young adults with disabilities who are in transition from school to work.”](#)

7. Getting Out the Word on Free and Accessible Services and Resources:

There are many online and in person resources to help employers and people with disabilities come together to build success. However, all the stakeholders need to be educated to know that these resources exist, and that they are free and user-friendly. These resources must also all be accessible. **Also, New Mexico should be careful not to waste money trying to re-invent the wheel in creating online resources as [ASKJAN.org](#), [the US Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment](#) Policy, [our organization and others also offer free toolkits, webinars and training opportunities](#). [Another resource is Understood.org](#).** This is a comprehensive resource to help families and individuals with learning and attention issues build their educational and career plans. It will be helpful to collaborate with those groups however to ensure that the best tools are created to fit the training and information needs on these issues.

8. Nothing About Us Without Us:

“Nothing About Us without Us” has long been a rallying cry for the one in five American who have a disability and it has implications for the workforce system. Even a non-voting member of a WIB can bring critical perspectives that improve the WIB’s efforts. As much as we pleased to find that VR is represented on the State Board, there is still yet more room for additional voices to offer their perspectives on disability and employment. **As such we recommend that your state plan look at adopting language which would include the placement of a representative from the disability community and a representative of your state’s VR system on your State Board.** Further, there is an additional opportunity for the Unified State Plan to direct local workforce boards to connect with local community organizations to recruit self-advocates to add their perspectives.

9. Aging workers and those with recently acquired disabilities must be specifically addressed in the plan:

Many people who have been in the workforce for decades find that before full retirement age they cannot keep up with the physical demands of their jobs. You should not wait until they lose their jobs to get involved. In Iowa, IVRS works with a major employer, Unity Point Hospital to “re-home” employees to other jobs within the same company when good workers can no longer do physical jobs and need a new assignment. They find that Emergency Room nurses, for example, come to a point where they can no longer keep up with the physical demands of that job. They have a department that works to “re-home” talented and valued employees who either age into a disability or acquire a disability through accident or illness. Empowering youth with disabilities to enter the workforce should be your highest priority, but keeping aging workers in the workforce until retirement age is also important. This

will take a specific strategy and effort so that you don't have massive numbers of people going onto disability rolls and out of the workplace prematurely.

10. The disability issues of people involved in the corrections system must be addressed:

While there is much good in New Mexico's WIOA state plan, there is also a significant missing piece as well. The workforce challenges and educational needs of ex-offenders are nowhere to be found in the current draft of New Mexico's Combined State Plan. Serving ex-offenders is a critical workforce development challenge yet it is absent from the WIOA plan. **We are sure Adult Education has addressed these challenges in the past and if those efforts are to be effectively in the future, this work needs to be viewed through the lens of disability. The reason is simple.** [According to recently published data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, "An estimated 32% of prisoners and 40% of jail inmates reported having at least one disability."](#) [This issue is a serious one and it needs to be addressed at the state level.](#) Frequently people are involved in the criminal justice system because they have disability issues, including learning differences, ADHD, executive function, and mental health issues that went undiagnosed and/or unaddressed through childhood and into the school years. Given these statistics from the BJS, it is vital that your state identify how many of the individuals in the ex-offender pipeline have disabilities.

The price paid for ignoring this issue are higher rates of recidivism and greater costs to society. Assessment tools are needed to identify disability issues as people enter the prison system. Doing so creates opportunities to address those issues productively. If people in the corrections system who will be released eventually are to be well served by New Mexico's workforce system, then it is vital that disability issues be identified and addressed in a way that will help work successfully in the future.

Conclusion:

As we stated at the beginning of our Public Comments, New Mexico has the opportunity to do much better on jobs for people with disabilities. From the language of the Combined State Plan, there is a lot of innovative and dedicated work being done on workforce development in New Mexico. However, it is critical that these systems, supports, and services collaborate in order to train and prepare job seekers with disabilities to be the talent that employers need and become increasing successful members of society. To be a fully accessible society, career pathways need ramps just as architecture does. The reason why this is imperative is simple. New Mexicans with disabilities want to pursue the American Dream, just like everyone else.

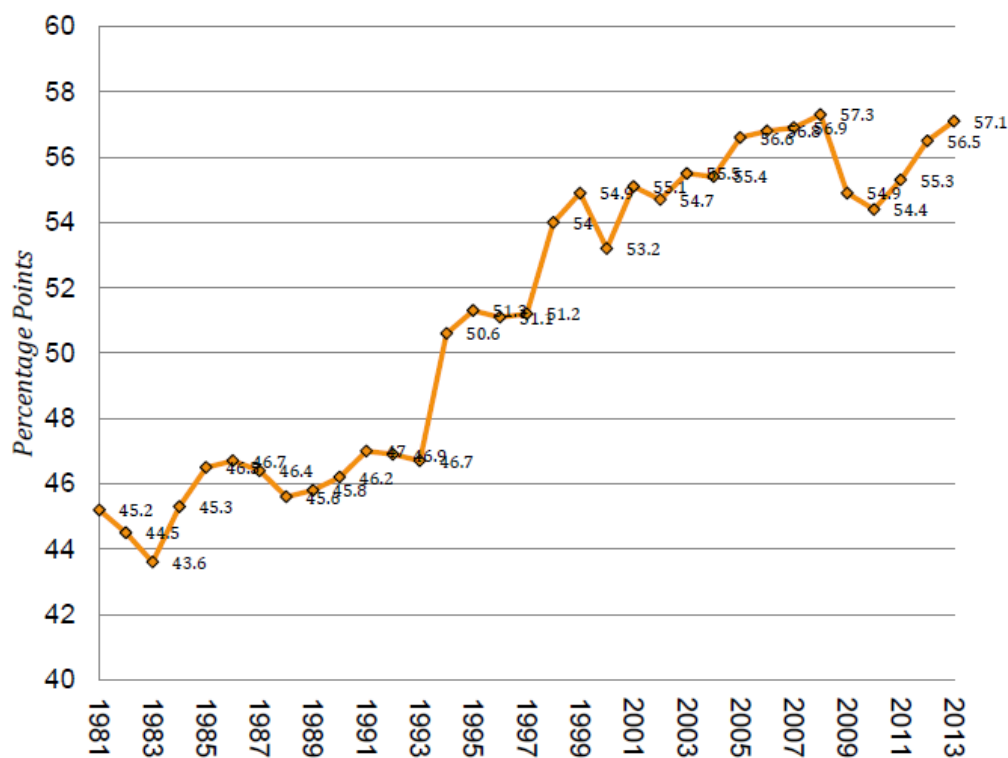
Thanks to WIOA, New Mexico has an opportunity to invest resources in successful models and implement best practices to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. We remain concerned with the lack of detail and coordination we have found in certain sections of New Mexico state plan. However, there is some good as well. Our public comments are focus on several critical factors that can help New Mexico to significantly improve outcomes and we hope see them implemented soon.

The bottom line is that expanding job opportunities for people with disabilities is win-win-win for employers, taxpayers and people with disabilities alike. It is good for employers because the loyalty, talent, and skills of workers with disabilities contribute to the employers' bottom line. It is good for the workforce system because improving services and supports for job seeker with disabilities will benefit others with different barriers to employment. It is good for

people with disabilities who want the dignity, pride, friendships, independence and income that work provides. We are happy to answer any questions you have and to help in any way.

We have included a chart below which looks at the gap in workforce participation between those with and without disabilities nationally over time. As seen in the chart, as women and minorities have been able to make significant strides in joining the workforce, people with disabilities have not. We know that by maximizing the potential of New Mexico's WIOA that all of this can change for the better for the people of our state.

Chart 1 – The gap nationally in workforce participation rates between people with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.



Source for chart is the Disabilities Compendium.

Below are two data tables that provide detailed information ranking the states in terms of employment rates for people with disabilities as well as the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. This has been added to show you where New Mexico ranks nationally and to showcase several of the data points needed in New Mexico's WIOA State Plan.

Table 1 Ranking 50 States by Employment Rates and Employment Gap

Data Source- Column 1: Table 2.1: Employment—Civilians with Disabilities Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States: 2013 from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

Data Source-Column 2: Table 2.9: Employment Gap—Civilians Ages 18 to 64 Years Living in the Community for the United States and States, by Disability Status: 2013 from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

Link: <http://disabilitycompendium.org/compendium-statistics/employment>

Column 1 Ranking of States by Employment Rate of People with Disabilities			Column 2 Ranking of States by the Employment Gap between People with disabilities and people without disabilities				
#	State	% of PWDs Employed	#	State	% of PWDs Employed	% of People without Disabilities Employed	Employment Gap as a %
1	North Dakota	52.8	1	Alaska	47.8	75.2	27.4
2	Wyoming	50.7	2	Wyoming	50.7	79.4	28.7
3	South Dakota	48.1	3	North Dakota	52.8	83.1	30.3
4	Alaska	47.8	4	Nevada	39.2	73.1	33.9
5	Minnesota	46	5	Utah	42.5	76.6	34.1
6	Nebraska	45.5	6	New Mexico	35.3	70.1	34.8
7	Iowa	44.8	7	South Dakota	48.1	83	34.9
8	Utah	42.5	8	Colorado	42.3	77.3	35
9	Colorado	42.3	9	Texas	38.7	74.7	36
10	New Hampshire	41.8	10	Minnesota	46	82.1	36.1
11	Kansas	41.7	11	Connecticut	40	76.4	36.4
12	Wisconsin	40.9	12	Hawaii	39.1	75.7	36.6
13	Connecticut	40	13	Nebraska	45.5	82.6	37.1
14	Maryland	40	14	Iowa	44.8	82.1	37.3
15	Montana	39.4	15	Kansas	41.7	79	37.3
16	Nevada	39.2	16	Montana	39.4	76.8	37.4
17	Hawaii	39.1	17	Arizona	33.6	71.3	37.7
18	Texas	38.7	18	Maryland	40	78.3	38.3
19	Virginia	36.9	19	Washington	36.4	74.7	38.3
20	Idaho	36.7	20	California	32.7	71.1	38.4
21	New Jersey	36.6	21	Idaho	36.7	75.2	38.5
22	Delaware	36.4	22	New Hampshire	41.8	80.3	38.5
23	Washington	36.4	23	New Jersey	36.6	75.1	38.5
24	Illinois	36.1	24	Delaware	36.4	75.1	38.7
25	Oklahoma	35.8	25	Oregon	35.2	73.9	38.7
26	New Mexico	35.3	26	Illinois	36.1	75	38.9
27	Oregon	35.2	27	Wisconsin	40.9	80.1	39.2
28	Massachusetts	34.9	28	Oklahoma	35.8	75.2	39.4

29	Rhode Island	34.3	29	Georgia	31.5	71.5	40
30	Pennsylvania	33.9	30	Virginia	36.9	76.9	40
31	Indiana	33.8	31	Louisiana	31.3	72.4	41.1
32	Arizona	33.6	32	New York	32.2	73.3	41.1
33	Ohio	33.5	33	Florida	30.5	72.2	41.7
34	Vermont	33.3	34	Pennsylvania	33.9	75.6	41.7
35	Missouri	33	35	S. Carolina	30.7	72.7	42
36	California	32.7	36	Rhode Island	34.3	76.3	42
37	New York	32.2	37	Indiana	33.8	76	42.2
38	Georgia	31.5	38	Ohio	33.5	75.9	42.4
39	Louisiana	31.3	39	Massachusetts	34.9	77.9	43
40	Maine	31.2	40	Mississippi	26.3	69.4	43.1
41	South Carolina	30.7	41	N. Carolina	30.3	73.5	43.2
42	Florida	30.5	42	Alabama	27.1	70.5	43.4
43	North Carolina	30.3	43	Michigan	29.9	73.4	43.5
44	Michigan	29.9	44	Tennessee	29.9	74.1	44.2
45	Tennessee	29.9	45	Missouri	33	77.1	44.1
46	Arizona	28.2	46	Arkansas	28.2	72.7	44.5
47	Alabama	27.1	47	W. Virginia	25.3	70.6	45.3
48	Kentucky	26.9	48	Vermont	33.3	79.6	46.3
49	Mississippi	26.3	49	Kentucky	26.9	73.7	46.8
50	West Virginia	25.3	50	Maine	31.2	78.8	47.6

Table 2

From 2012 to 2013, the employment gap closed by one percentage point or more in 22 states.

The top four states with the greatest reductions (AK, RI, WY, and NH) were small states-- with working-age populations under one million persons. It is hard to make comments about small states, because these statistics are estimates based on state-level samples. Smaller states have smaller samples and thus have a higher degree of year-to-year variability. I am hesitant to read too much into reductions and expansions in the employment gap for small states.

Looking at large states-- with working-age populations over 5 million persons--Illinois (a 2.3 percentage point reduction) and New Jersey (a 1 percentage point reduction) stand out. These are two large industrial states

All of the states that experienced reductions greater than one percentage point also experienced increases in employment rate of people with disabilities, so none of these reductions were due to a reduction in the employment rate of people without disabilities.

The state that really stands out is South Carolina, with a 2.3-point reduction, while also having a 1.3-point increase in the employment rate of people without disabilities. The big question is whether we can attribute success, like the success in South Carolina to changes in policy or new innovative approaches to employing people with disabilities.

Working-age population under 1 million
Working-age population over 5 million
Increase in no dis employment

State	2012			2013			Change in Gap		Pop in 2013			Increase in Dis. Emp.	Increase in Non-PWD Emp.
	Dis.	No Dis.	Gap	Dis.	No Dis.	Gap	Pct. Points	Rank	Number	Rank	Size		
AK	39.0	76.3	37.3	47.8	75.2	27.4	-9.9	50	459,776	47	Working-age pop. under 1 million	8.8	-1.1
RI	28.7	77.0	48.3	34.3	76.3	42.0	-6.3	49	668,448	43	Working-age pop. under 1 million	5.6	-0.7
WY	43.9	78.5	34.6	50.7	79.4	28.7	-5.9	48	358,526	50	Working-age pop. under 1 million	6.8	0.9

NH	37.9	80.5	42.6	41.8	80.3	38.5	-4.1	47	842,880	40	Working-age pop. under 1 million	3.9	-0.2
MN	42.1	81.6	39.6	46.0	82.1	36.1	-3.5	46	3,357,171	21		3.9	0.5
NV	35.5	72.2	36.7	39.2	73.1	33.9	-2.8	45	1,719,885	34		3.7	0.9
WI	37.6	79.5	41.9	40.9	80.1	39.2	-2.7	44	3,544,103	20		3.3	0.6
SC	27.0	71.4	44.4	30.7	72.7	41.9	-2.5	42	2,893,842	24		3.7	1.3
NM	33.1	70.4	37.3	35.3	70.1	34.8	-2.5	42	1,243,353	36		2.2	-0.3
IL	33.4	74.6	41.2	36.1	75.0	38.9	-2.3	41	8,010,771	5	Working-age pop. over 5 million	2.7	0.4
IA	42.0	81.4	39.5	44.8	82.1	37.2	-2.3	40	1,868,852	30		2.8	0.7
UT	41.1	77.2	36.1	42.5	76.6	34.1	-2.0	39	1,701,705	35		1.4	-0.6
DE	34.6	75.1	40.6	36.4	75.1	38.7	-1.9	38	565,138	45	Working-age population under 1 million	1.8	0
CO	40.3	77.1	36.8	42.3	77.3	35.0	-1.8	36	3,304,940	22		2.0	0.2
HI	37.3	75.6	38.3	39.1	75.7	36.5	-1.8	36	822,542	42	Working-age population under 1 million	1.8	0.1
NE	43.5	82.2	38.7	45.5	82.6	37.1	-1.6	35	1,125,425	38		2.0	0.4
ND	51.6	83.3	31.7	52.8	83.1	30.2	-1.5	34	451,304	48	Working-age population under 1 million	1.2	-0.2
KS	40.1	78.8	38.7	41.7	79.0	37.3	-1.4	33	1,730,369	33		1.6	0.2
MA	33.0	77.2	44.2	34.9	77.9	42.9	-1.3	31	4,272,843	14		1.9	0.7
OK	34.4	75.1	40.7	35.8	75.2	39.4	-1.3	31	2,295,734	28		1.4	0.1
TN	28.0	73.2	45.2	29.9	74.1	44.1	-1.1	30	3,983,560	16		1.9	0.9
NJ	35.0	74.5	39.5	36.6	75.1	38.5	-1.0	29	5,528,837	11	Working-age pop. over 5 million	1.6	0.6
TX	37.0	73.8	36.9	38.7	74.7	36.0	-0.9	28	#####	2	Working-age pop. over 5	1.7	0.9

FL	28.9	71.4	42.5	30.5	72.2	41.7	-0.8	27	#####	4	million Working -age pop. over 5 million	1.6	0.8
NY	30.9	72.7	41.8	32.2	73.3	41.1	-0.7	26	#####	3	Working -age pop. over 5 million	1.3	0.6
AL	26.8	70.8	44.0	27.1	70.5	43.4	-0.6	25	2,945,466	23		0.3	-0.3
GA	30.3	70.8	40.5	31.5	71.5	40.0	-0.5	22	6,151,890	8	Working -age pop. over 5 million	1.2	0.7
CT	39.7	76.6	36.9	40.0	76.4	36.4	-0.5	22	2,235,695	29		0.3	-0.2
WV	24.3	70.1	45.8	25.3	70.6	45.3	-0.5	22	1,132,703	37		1.0	0.5
WA	35.7	74.3	38.7	36.4	74.7	38.3	-0.4	21	4,339,199	13		0.7	0.4
PA	33.0	75.1	42.1	33.9	75.6	41.7	-0.4	20	7,849,516	6	Working -age pop. over 5 million	0.9	0.5
MT	38.7	76.4	37.7	39.4	76.8	37.4	-0.3	19	616,125	44	Working -age pop. under 1 million	0.7	0.4
MI	27.9	71.7	43.8	29.9	73.4	43.5	-0.3	18	6,096,761	9	Working -age pop. over 5 million	2.0	1.7
MS	26.4	69.6	43.3	26.3	69.4	43.1	-0.2	17	1,790,746	31		-0.1	-0.2
CA	31.8	70.2	38.5	32.7	71.1	38.4	-0.1	15	#####	1	Working -age pop. over 5 million	0.9	0.9
VA	36.3	76.5	40.1	36.9	76.9	40.0	-0.1	15	5,112,923	12	Working -age pop. over 5 million	0.6	0.4
KY	26.2	72.9	46.7	26.9	73.7	46.8	0.1	14	2,687,179	26		0.7	0.8
OH	32.8	75.1	42.2	33.5	75.9	42.4	0.2	13	7,072,114	7	Workin g-age pop.	0.7	0.8

											over 5 million		
MO	32.2	76.2	44.0	33.0	77.1	44.2	0.2	12	3,666,019	19		0.8	0.9
MD	39.5	77.4	37.9	40.0	78.3	38.2	0.3	11	3,722,201	18		0.5	0.9
IN	33.5	75.5	41.9	33.8	76.0	42.3	0.4	10	4,008,950	15		0.3	0.5
VT	34.3	79.8	45.5	33.3	79.6	46.3	0.8	9	397,726	49	Working-age pop under 1 million	-1.0	-0.2
AZ	34.2	71.0	36.8	33.6	71.3	37.7	0.9	8	3,900,900	17		-0.6	0.3
OR	34.3	72.1	37.8	35.2	73.9	38.8	1.0	7	2,440,752	27		0.9	1.8
NC	30.2	72.2	42.0	30.3	73.5	43.2	1.2	6	6,000,202	10	Working-age pop. over 5 million	0.1	1.3
ID	38.6	74.8	36.2	36.7	75.2	38.5	2.3	5	946,943	39	Working-age pop. under 1 million	-1.9	0.4
ME	33.2	78.1	44.8	31.2	78.8	47.6	2.8	4	825,507	41	Working-age pop. under 1 million	-2.0	0.7
LA	34.4	72.6	38.2	31.3	72.4	41.1	2.9	3	2,825,101	25		-3.1	-0.2
AR	31.4	72.7	41.3	28.2	72.7	44.5	3.2	2	1,759,900	32		-3.2	0
SD	52.0	81.8	29.8	48.1	83.0	34.9	5.1	1	501,769	46	Working-age pop. under 1 million	-3.9	1.2

Labor Market Status of Individuals with Barriers to Employment

The Act also requires states to address the employment and labor status of “individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities.” [WIOA, Section 102(b)(1)(B)].

The preceding analysis of Michigan labor force status by demographic characteristic provides a glimpse of the differences in employment, unemployment, and labor force participation across groups such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and others. There are other groups of individuals identified by the Act, and many face workforce challenges.

Individuals with a Disability

Figure 9: Individuals with Disability Employment, Unemployment, & Labor Force Participation, 2010-2014

Year	Indicator	Michigan			United States		
		No Disability	With Disability	Total	No Disability	With Disability	Total
2010	Participation Rate	68.0%	20.6%	62.0%	70.1%	21.8%	64.7%
	Unemployment Rate	11.8%	21.9%	12.2%	9.4%	14.8%	9.6%
	Employed to Population	60.0%	16.1%	54.4%	63.5%	18.6%	58.5%
2012	Participation Rate	66.7%	18.7%	60.0%	69.4%	20.6%	63.7%
	Unemployment Rate	9.0%	11.9%	9.1%	7.9%	13.4%	8.1%
	Employed to Population	60.7%	16.5%	54.5%	63.9%	17.8%	58.6%
2014	Participation Rate	66.8%	20.5%	60.5%	68.7%	19.5%	62.9%
	Unemployment Rate	7.0%	13.5%	7.3%	5.9%	12.5%	6.2%
	Employed to Population	62.1%	17.8%	56.1%	64.6%	17.0%	59.0%

Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) (Unpublished Data)

- In general, Michigan displays lower labor force participation rates than the nation for both individuals with and without a disability. However, in Michigan the participation rate of persons with a disability trended differently than the rate for people without a disability, dropping by about two percentage points between 2010 and 2012 and bouncing back by 2014. The rate for individuals without a disability decreased between 2010 and 2012 but has stayed flat since then.
- In Michigan, the labor force participation rate and the employment to population ratio of individuals with a disability are close to three times lower than the rates for persons without a disability. (Figure 9)
- In 2014, the participation rate for individuals with disabilities was estimated at 21 percent, considerably lower than that for those with no disability (67 percent). Individuals with disabilities also faced higher unemployment rates measuring 13.5 percent, nearly double the 7.0 percent reported for those with no disability.



RESPECTABILITY

NM and Jobs for PwDs

Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President

www.RespectAbilityUSA.org

New Mexico



Gov. Susana Martinez (R)

- ❖ 70.1% of persons without disabilities aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ 35.3% of PwDs aged 18 to 64 are employed.³
- ❖ New Mexico ranks 26th in the nations of jobs for PWDs.
- ❖ **There is a 34.8 point gap between the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of PWDs and those without disabilities. This is an important performance metric to measure as this gap must be reduced.**
- ❖ 311,773 persons in NM have a disability.³
- ❖ 9,900 persons aged 16 to 20 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 157,900 persons aged 21 to 64 have a disability.¹
- ❖ 30,600 PwDs aged 18 to 64 receive benefits.¹
- ❖ In 2012, NM's total expenditure on SSDI benefits was \$879,048,000.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. received 95 blind applicants and 3,126 general applicants in NM in 2012.³
- ❖ Voc. Rehab. obtained 718 jobs for PwDs in NM in 2012.²

1. 2012 Disability Status Report: New Mexico, disabilitystatistics.org
2. StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013
3. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

New Mexico Data

		People with Disabilities (%)		People without Disabilities (%)	
		2012	2013	2012	2013
Poverty ¹	US	29.2	28.7	13.6	13.6
	NM	32.6	29.0	17.6	19.5
Smoking ¹	US	26.0	25.4	16.9	16.2
	NM	23.8	24.7	18.0	17.4
Obesity ¹	US	39.1	40.1	24.5	25.0
	NM	34.3	33.5	24.7	24.2
Employment ¹	US	32.7	33.9	73.6	74.2
	NM	33.1	35.3	70.4	70.1

1. [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#). Pg 53, 54, 72, 73, 29

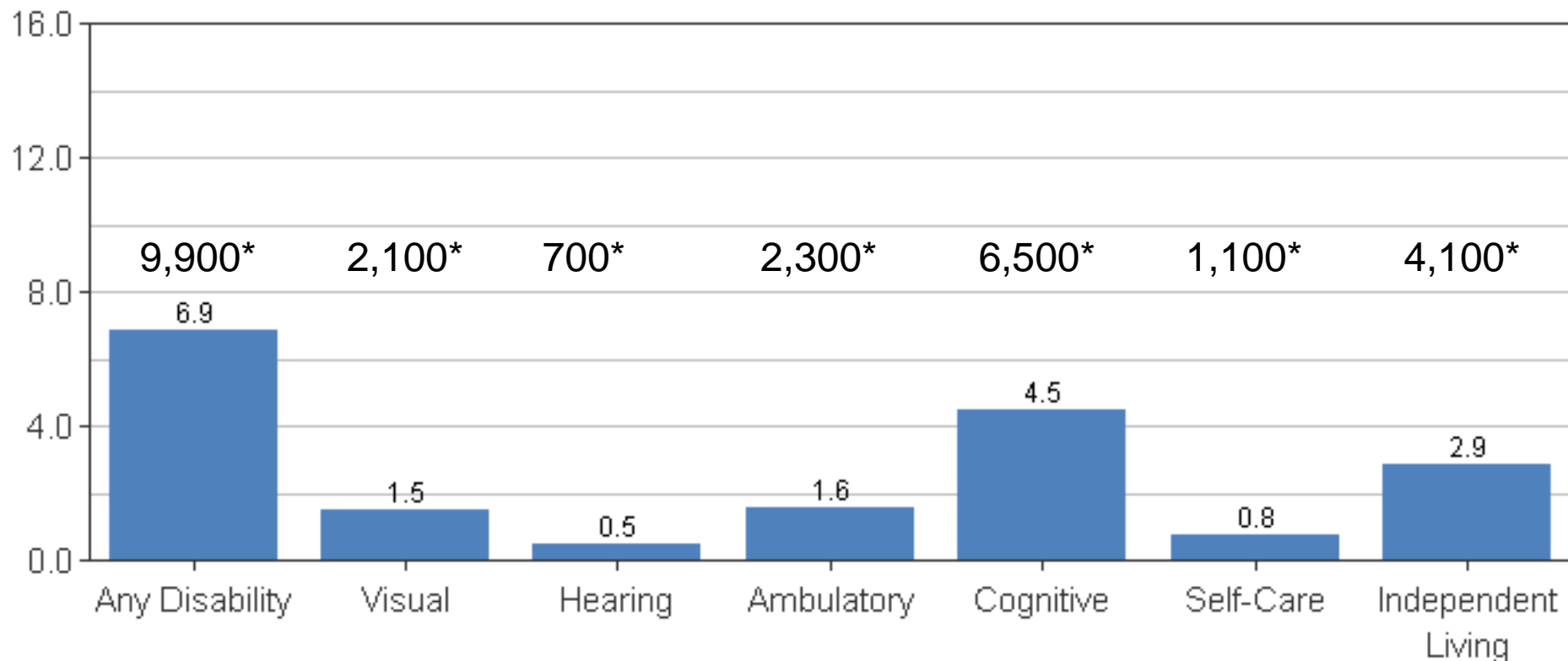
NM Ages 6 to 21 Served Under IDEA

	2011	2012
All Disabilities	41,534	42,004
Specific Learning Disability	18,018	18,832
Speech or Language Impairment	9,790	9,185
Intellectual Disability	1,781	1,895
Emotional Disturbance	2,059	2,041
Multiple Disability	847	830
Hearing Impairment	514	510
Orthopedic Impairment	253	251
Other Health Impairment	3,445	3,654
Visual Impairment	191	177
Autism	1,596	1799
Deaf Blindness	7	6
Traumatic Brain Injury	190	180
Developmental Delay	2,673	2,644

Source: [Annual Disability Statistics Compendium](#)

Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 16 to 20 in New Mexico in 2012

Prevalence Rates: Age 16 to 20 years (%)

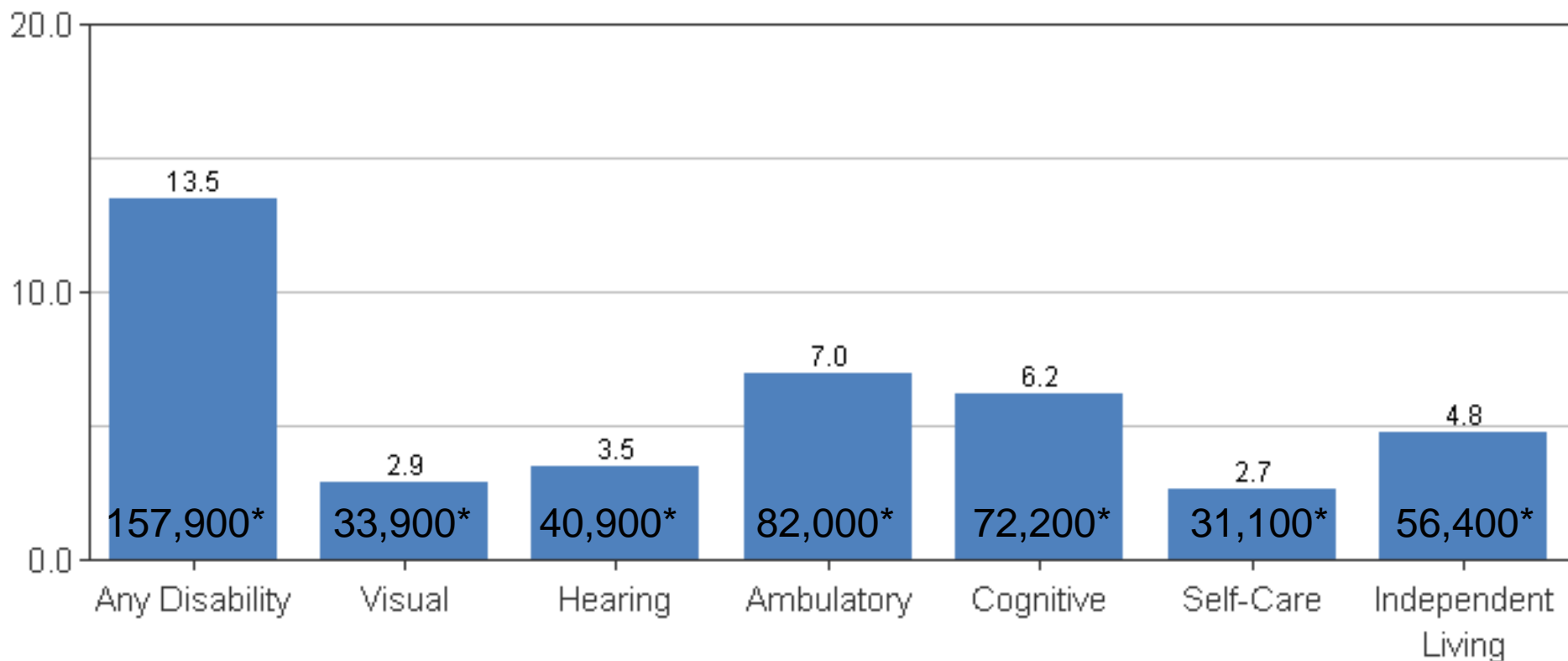


*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Prevalence of Disability Among Non-Institutionalized People Ages 21 to 64 in New Mexico in 2012

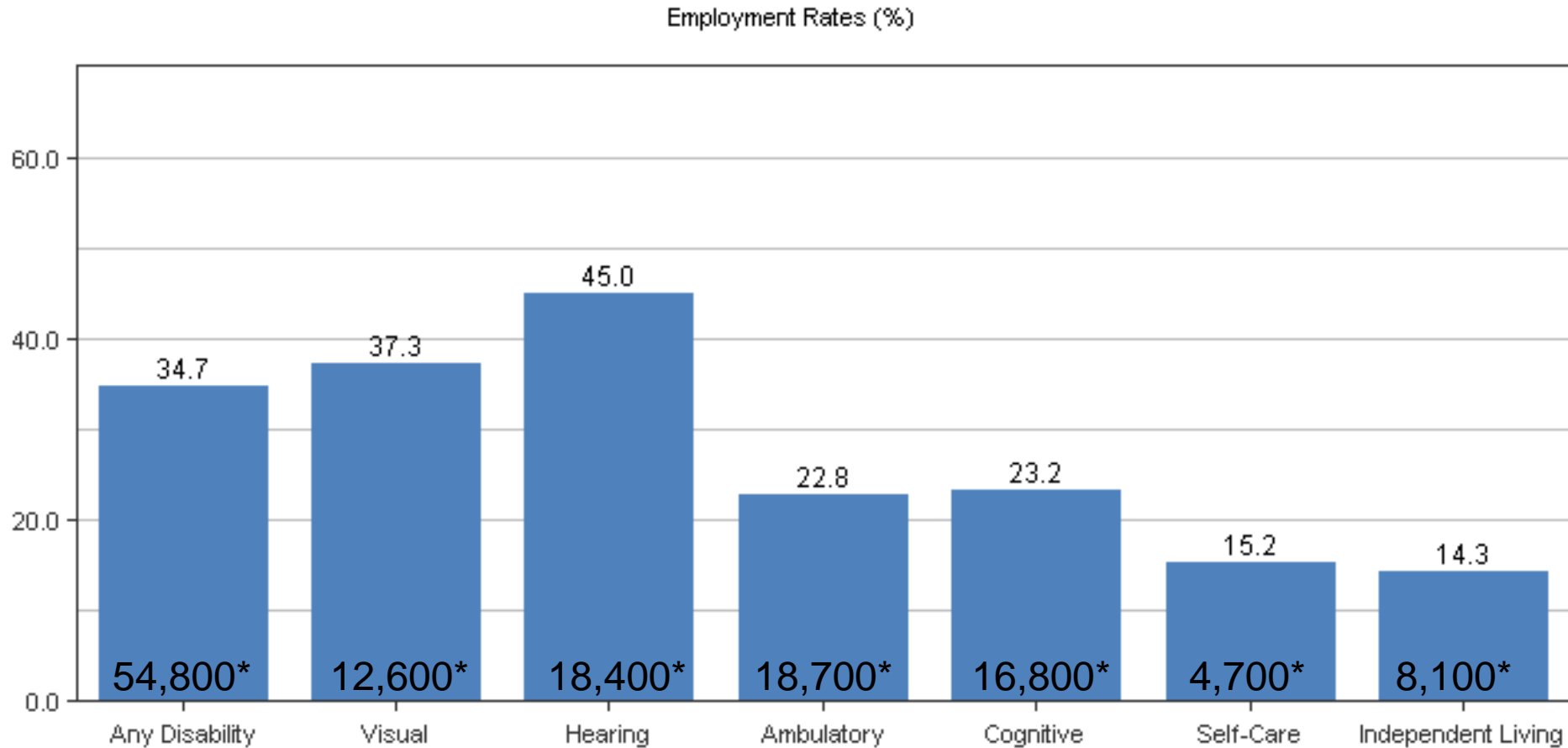
Prevalence Rates: Age 21 to 64 years (%)



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Employment of Non-Institutionalized Working-Age People (Ages 21 to 64) by Disability Status in New Mexico in 2012



*Total numbers reported

Source: [Cornell University](#)

Project SEARCH: Program Description

- ❖ One school year or 9 months.
- ❖ 10 – 12 young adults with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- ❖ Instructor and job coaches.
- ❖ Immersed in host business culture.
- ❖ Rotations through unpaid internships with continual feedback.
- ❖ Outcome of employment in the community.

Project SEARCH: HUGE \$ SAVER!

The Project SEARCH

Definition of a Successful Outcome:

- ❖ Competitive employment in an integrated setting.
- ❖ Year-round work.
- ❖ 16 hours per week or more.
- ❖ Minimum wage or higher.

- ❖ 273 programs in 44 states.
- ❖ 2500 young people per year.
- ❖ 60% healthcare, 40% broad mix of business types.
- ❖ 68% employment.
- ❖ 88% employee benefit eligible.
 - 35% take employee benefits, usually at 5 years.
 - Benefits alone save roughly 1 million dollars over a lifetime.
 - Family involvement curriculum to drive familial change in attitude.

Contact Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us

Contact Erin Riehle at Erin.Riehle@cchmc.org

Which Employers in Your State Must Meet 503 Rules (Hire PwDs)?

❖ Top contractors:

- Lockheed Martin Corp.
- Los Alamos National Security LLC
- URS Corp.
- The Regents of the University of California
- New Mexico Technology Group LLC

- Complete list → [fed spending website](http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?reptype=p&detail=-1&fiscal_year=2011&sortby=f&database=fpds&datatype=T&stateCode=NM)

http://www.fedspending.org/fpds/fpds.php?reptype=p&detail=-1&fiscal_year=2011&sortby=f&database=fpds&datatype=T&stateCode=NM

- Complete federal lists of 2006-2013 → [Federal Procurement Data System website](https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng/cms/index.php/en/reports/62-top-100-contractors-report3.html)

<https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng/cms/index.php/en/reports/62-top-100-contractors-report3.html>

- How to get started: Job Accommodation Network → <https://askjan.org/>

US Business Leadership Network → <http://usbIn.org/>

Jobs in NM

Top expected growth occupations in New Mexico:

- Personal care aids
- Home health aids
- Occupational therapy assistants
- Interpreters and translators
- Meeting, convention, and event planners

America's Career InfoNet → <http://www.careerinfo.net/oview1.asp?next=oview1&Level=overall&optstatus=&jobfam=&id=1&nodeid=3&soccode=&ShowAll=&stfips=35>

[Click for your state workforce board](#)

<https://www.jobs.state.nm.us/gsipub/index.asp?docid=322>

[Click for your state integrated plan](#)

<http://www.dws.state.nm.us/WIAPolicyPlansAnnualReports>

Resources

- ❖ StateData: The National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes, 2013 (data from 2012)
- ❖ 2012 Disability Status Report United States, Cornell University, 2012: www.disabilitystatistics.org
- ❖ Fedspending: www.fedspending.org
- ❖ Project SEARCH: www.projectsearch.us
- ❖ Job Accommodation Network: <https://askjan.org/>
- ❖ State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency:
http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SVR
- ❖ RespectAbilityUSA: www.respectabilityusa.org

Let Us Know If We Can Help!

We have many resources for policy makers and employers on our website and are ready to help!

**RespectAbilityUSA
4340 East-West Hwy, Suite 1100
Bethesda, MD 20814**

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