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RespectAbility

URGENT WIOA DEADLINES:

FREE WEBINAR TO ENABLE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO GET JOBS

1.8.16 1:30 p.m. ET

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>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Hello, and welcome. This is Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi.

[This conference is now being recorded]

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Hello, this is Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization, and we represent people with disabilities who want to have a better future. I am joined by my colleague, Philip Pauli, our Policies and Practices Director, for this webinar. I want to thank all of you who have joined us for this discussion.

Philip and I have been working on this WIOA implementation for some period of time. Over this period of time we've had the pleasure and honor of meeting one on one with at least 42 of America's Governors to discuss this and we're very, very pleased to have worked with many Workforce Boards, Workforce agencies, and terrific voc-rehab organizations, in addition to many advocacy organizations, self-advocates, and family members of people with disabilities. You should know that we have no financial stake in any of the guidance that we're going to be giving you, and I want to say that we have a very big thanks for our corporate sponsor of this webinar, JP Morgan Chase, which made this entire webinar possible. It's very important that we discuss this topic, because there is a looming deadline that impacts all of us.

Some people don't really recognize just how historic and transformational the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is, so let me just go through a couple of the bullet points on why this is such historic, important legislation, and why the work you do as the result of this webinar is so very critical.

First of all, as I think most of us on the call know, there are 56 million Americans with Disabilities, or one out of every 5 Americans. However, 21 million of us are working age. And 70% of those people who are working age do not have jobs. Despite the fact that most of them want to work, and, in fact, a very recent Kessler study showed that

approximately 70% of working-age people with disabilities are currently striving for work. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is an update of previously existing legislation.

Some people say: Why is it so important when there was WIA before WIOA? There was money for the Workforce Training Program before. There's money now. What's the difference?

This is the first time where all \$17 billion that is allocated each year needs to be open to people with disabilities. In other words, previously what it was was that about \$3.7 billion went to voc-rehab, but all the rest of the money went to things, very good things, like programs for people coming out of prison, people coming out of orphanages or foster care, people coming out of homelessness or other kinds of difficulties where they have a barrier to work, but never before did those programs have an obligation or an opportunity to put the disability lens on the work they're doing.

So if you have a disability coming out of prison or out of another kind of difficult situation, they weren't taking a look at do they have attention deficit disorder, a mental health or addiction issue? What is it we can do to enable them with their different abilities to succeed as a whole person? And so now for the first time, all \$17 billion of the money the federal government is dealing with will have to look at the entire 360 degrees of an individual, which means it can be much, much more successful, and it gives us the opportunity to break down the silos and to really fund the best practices.

But some of the challenges are that there are a tremendous number of amazing people who have devoted decades to working with people coming out of prison, or people with other barriers to work, that now will be asked to be working with people with disabilities when they've had no training in how to do this, perhaps, or it's all new to them, or maybe they had training 15 years ago before there was assistive technologies that would enable a blind person to read on a computer or someone who's deaf to use Dragon software to have somebody provide captions for them as they're having a conversation.

-- went through something called better bottom line, employing people with disabilities and many of the Governors were educated at least to some extent on these issues and some Governors are doing an extraordinary job. And in fact I think it's really critical to point out that some states already have tremendous performance, so if you look at the Dakotas, if you look at Wyoming, you will see approximately 50% of people with disabilities are actually in the Workforce, whereas if you look at a state like California and you see only 32% of the people are in the Workforce who have disabilities, so there are tremendous variances, and you see there's a lot of misinformation. There was recently a big news piece saying things are great for people in Vermont. Yes, there's a lot of people working in Vermont in competitive integrated employment if they are working and they have a disability but the fact is that in Vermont, they have horrific standards in terms of their outcomes for whether people

with disabilities are employed at all, because the gaps in that state between those with and without disabilities are huge. I think it's the third worst in the country. So it's very, very important to look at actual reality, and not myths.

And we have very little time with which to do that. Why do we have some little time? Because legally, every state has only a certain window in which they can create their plans, and then they post them legally they have to post them on the web, and then once they're on the web, the public can comment, and we are right now in the comment period, and we're going to go through that.

But before we do I want to just mention a couple other things. One is that RespectAbility worked on these ideas that we're sharing with you today, along with some of our partners. That's the NACDD, that represents people with developmental disabilities, the paralyzed Veterans of America, Best Buddies, the Independent Living Movement and NOD all helped us prepare a Tool to help showcase best practices. And you can download this Tool for free right there with that link.

Additionally, you have some other exciting developments. So for example, the federal government has new 503 rules that say that Federal contractors are expected to have 7% of their Workforce be people with disabilities. And it's 402 is the piece for Veterans. And this is a very different new piece of information, because previously, Federal contractors might say: Hey, I want to hire people with disabilities. I will have 10 people working in a sheltered workshop stuffing envelopes for me.

Well, now the new rule says it needs to be in all job categories. So if you're Lockheed-Martin or Boeing or Raytheon or another Federal contractors and you have engineers and managers and HR professionals and communications professionals, you're expected to have people with disabilities in all different job categories.

Moreover, you have the brand new ABLE Act which enables some families of people who developed their disabilities before the age of 26 to have some savings without losing their benefits which is very important. That new law just came into place and it has not fully been implemented yet just like the WIOA is in the process of being implemented but it does take away some of the barriers to work.

Lastly, there is this terrific Group, the U.S. Business Leadership Network. The U.S. Business Leadership Network is a Consortium of companies that really are devoted to inclusive hiring of people with disabilities, so if you're in a state you should look for your State affiliate, the Business Leadership Network, because they're an ideal partner for you as we go through the WIOA implementation process.

So as we go through this process S. let's take a look at some of the deadlines. Coming up are some very, very soon and you can see them. Missouri, Wisconsin, California, Kansas, West Virginia, Oregon and Delaware are all coming up really, really soon. I just want to tell you that I've read through the California one. I thought that the gaps were

enormous. The missed opportunities are huge, that a lot of really good people put a lot of good work into it but sometimes the people working on these things, they just don't know what they don't know, and therefore, it is up to us to really fill in those gaps as the public that really cares about these issues, to help fill in those pieces of information.

By the way, we've already submitted comments on some of the other states -- Iowa, Georgia, and Indiana -- and you can see the links on this webinar if you want to see the comments we did on those states, but there are obviously 50 states and all 50 states will go through this process and if you see the blue line that means they have already published their State Plan. So that you can already start reading it and preparing your own testimony, your own comments, for this and if there is no blue ink next to your state that means it's pending but let me tell you these things are pending really, really soon. They're coming to be coming fast and furious and you need to really be aware that the time lines that they give you with which to provide comments are not very long.

So how do you start? I always suggest that you start by looking at the facts. Look at the facts in your state. So you can see that for every single state, we have a PowerPoint, or if you prefer to use it in a PDF, where you can see key statistics about your state. You can know the Workforce Participation Rates, how many people with disabilities there are. I'll show you a sample of that later in this webinar.

But after the webinar is over, I highly encourage you to go back to this PowerPoint. By the way, the PowerPoint is on the website, so later you'll be able to download it, and you'll be able to access this information.

Additionally, we've published op-eds about this critical process in many states. The majority of states are states that have published an op-ed on this topic so here are links to the publications we've done and what's helpful I think about this is it sums up a state in 700 words or less, so you can take a look at some of your key data. So I hope that that is helpful to you and I want to just point out, this is our cheat sheet. This is our State Plan checklist that if you miss all the other things that are good to do and you can only do some of the things that we are recommending to you, what are the most important things that you absolutely positively must do? So number one is that most states when they look at their performance metrics they look at the unemployment rate.

Well, that is a necessary thing to do, but it is not sufficient. And what they must do is they must have the Workforce Participation Rate. Why is that? Because as people with disabilities start to be hired, more people with disabilities will want to go into the Workforce, and actually, the unemployment rate might go up, but at the end of the day, that might be a good sign, because they're starting to be actively engaged in the active searching for a job process.

So you want to use the Workforce Participation Rate, and you want to be taking a look at that, people with disabilities compared to those without disabilities. You want to look at White versus African American,

Hispanic versus Caucasian, male versus female, et cetera, Workforce Participation Rate. If it's not in your performance metrics, you are not doing the right thing by people with disabilities, because there's no more important real measure of success than the Workforce Participation Rate.

I say that because nationally, only 30% of people with disabilities are in the Workforce today, only 30% of working-age folks with disabilities, and we've got to move those numbers and if you're not looking at those at a regular basis and holding yourself accountable, it's going to be very hard to move the needle if you don't know which direction is north. You want to be making sure you're looking at the current data. Again, we've got a link to data but that data is actually updated every year.

And you want to be looking at all your performance metrics and in your strategy and I'm going to go through this more about the Jackie Robinson strategy and the State Plan, et cetera, in terms of those sorts of things later but I do think it's important to understand that partnerships and collaborations between government agencies, between employers, parents, individuals with disabilities, is going to be very, very important in this process. So the second piece that's very important, after the performance metrics, is your employer engagement. Many of the plans that we have seen so far do not sufficiently address actually getting the Workforce needs of the existing employers that are out there. I think your best value-added is to take a look at the Federal contractors in your state. By the way 20% of all jobs are Federal contractors. And have that touch. So take a look and we'll talk about this more later, the Federal contractors in your state. We'll give you a link to that at fedspending.org because the fact is that it is very, very vital that they get the help they need to fill those slots and that you have the place to really put talent into as they go into the talent pipeline.

And this includes apprenticeships and internships especially. You need to be looking at the reasonable accommodations and the accessibility issues, and you need to be looking very seriously at youth with disabilities.

Why youth with disabilities? Youth with disabilities have very high expectations. They have gone to school after the IDEA legislation passed which means that they have been in the least restrictive environment possible in school. They've been in regular public school. They want to work just like anyone else, and because also the couch is really the enemy of employment. So you are always going to be more successful when you have a smooth trajectory from school into job, because if you interrupt that and you go from school to their parents' couch and then people sit there and their get up and go skills degrade it's going to make it much harder for them to get a job.

So there are 300,000 Americans that are -- with disabilities that are aging into the Workforce from school every single year, and in your state making sure that your State Plan really addresses them is vital, and that

includes STEM qualifications, et cetera, et cetera.

Your Workforce Strategy really needs to be looking at the sectors, and you need to take a look at the American Job Centers, and I will also say that many of the American Job Centers are not terribly successful, and in fact, many are very unsuccessful in working with people with disabilities. And some people think: Well, we should spend all of our money putting elevators on our buildings at our one-stop shops, and what we recommend is: Think before you do that because you might do better having less bricks and mortar in terms of your one-stop shops, and just having mobile units that go around to schools, and go around to places that are social service agencies and places where you can see the customers and work with them out in the field. And that bricks and mortar is not the most efficient thing.

The most efficient and effective things thing are really good transition programs, internships and apprenticeships particularly for youth with disabilities where you will see a very good rate of return on your investment.

As you go through this process, Governors are leading the way. Legally they have the most authority on this issue. They're the convenors of all the different stakeholders. Again, we've met with the majority of Governors. Many of them are highly, highly engaged on this issue particularly Governor Jack Markell of Delaware, Governor Daugaard, Governor Walker and Bryant and others have been excited about these issues but I want to say again that some states including the Dakotas, including Alaska and Wyoming have some very good performance metrics on employing people with disabilities and other states like Mississippi and Vermont and Maine have really terrible outcomes and so you want to look at bringing together these different silos.

So who are the different silos? You've got the Workforce development, you've got taxes incentives, Healthcare, transportation, voc-rehab, your stakeholders which are people with disabilities and their family members, the employers, that's that Business Leadership Network I mentioned to you and you can really, really work with your contractors and other leaders so you want go breaking down these silos. I will say that very, very important to work with education because there is tremendous evidence that if you have high expectations for young people with disabilities and you're working with their families, when these families have kids that are in middle school and you're talking to them about getting job skills, doing community service, getting internships, that's you're going to see much better outcomes as these young people age into the Workforce.

What are the core messages that work in terms of the public, in terms of helping to bring together these disparate views? It's clearly pointing out that the majority of Americans with Disabilities who are working age do want to work, and they represent the talent pool of 11 million Americans who can make companies and organizations stronger and better.

Secondly, that hiring people with disabilities can make companies more successful. Walgreens, Ernst & Young, AMC and others have found this to be true as employees with disabilities, when they're aligned with the talents and interests, are productive, loyal and have fewer workplace accidents than employees without disabilities. Yes, you heard that right. If you look at the scientific data, people with disabilities, they don't quit on you, that when you hire them, they appreciate their job. They are happy to be there, and they're not quitting. So your turnover costs in industries that are high turnovers like hospitality, like in retail, like in cleaning services, you're going to save a lot of money as an employer if you hire someone with a disability.

Number 3, that it really saves a lot of money for taxpayers if you do this right. I'll give you an example. If a young person with a disability doesn't get a job coming out of school, somebody with an intellectual disability overall, about 80% are not getting a job, and then they will be on Disability benefits for their entire life and so if they can instead get a job -- and we'll talk about some specific ideas on that, specific strategies that should be in your State Plans and should be actually itemized and listed out in your State Plans, they can save a fortune for the government.

What are the benefits for the companies? I started to talk about that. These are some links to some academic studies and some case studies, some scientific studies that you can show to employers that they are great, great in terms of loyalty to their employers, and in terms of safety records. Really a benefit for companies to hire people with disabilities.

Now again, that doesn't mean that you're hiring a person who is blind to do seeing work. You have to stop and think and say: What is the ability that this person has? How do you align it for the job? But the fact is that everybody has an ability, and if you take the time to think through, you can do extraordinary things, and clearly far better than what we're achieving because right now, 95% of people who go on government benefits who are working age and who want to work are not getting jobs and ever getting off of those benefits.

So young people with disabilities, I mentioned this before, you've got every year 300,000 of them aging into the Workforce. That's 1.2 million nationally that we should be working with, because those folks are our talent pipeline. And your work is what's going to determine their future, and frankly, how much it also costs the taxpayers and whether or not the employers in your area have the talent they need to be successful in a global economy.

What is the Jackie Robinson Strategy? Jackie Robinson was an African American baseball player. He was the first African American player to play in the major leagues. The thing was he was really, really good at his job and he was a really nice person, a stand-up person, so he was win-win-win. So what I tell people is: Don't try and go by getting somebody with the most involved disabilities into a job that isn't a fit.

Look for the situation where you can create a Jackie Robinson situation, where you can find people with disabilities who are going to be very good at their jobs, make their employers very happy so their first impression is positive, because you only get one chance to make a first impression, and it needs to be a positive first impression.

So you want to use the Jackie Robinson Strategy, and I know that a lot of Workforce agencies are trying to start with people who have the most involved disabilities, who have multiple disabilities, who have need a lot of aid to do things, and the fact is, that you have to break down the stigmas that the employers have about the capabilities of people with disabilities, and so if you want to help people with the most involved disabilities get the most jobs and the furthest ahead it's better to start with your Jackie Robinson strategy, maybe sure they get comfortable with the talent they're bringing on so that's a success so then the door can open for everybody else. Let's face it there are very few Jackie Robinsons in the world. No matter what the color of their skin is not many people can play baseball like Jackie Robinson but it's always better to start when you have a win.

There's lots of super stars with disabilities that are out there whether it's Albert Einstein, some people say had autism, but he clearly had learning differences, and failed out of school. You have Stephen Hawking. Most people with disabilities are not going to be Stephen Hawkings, they're just not that talented because most people without disabilities aren't that talented but they do have a talent that is going to be fabulous for some employer, and you can harness that talent to make this nation stronger.

So who are the employers that you want to work with? This is one of the biggest problems that we're seeing in the plans, is that people are not sitting down with the actual employers to talk through the actual needs that they have for talent, and how we're going to practically go about doing this. So what I suggest is every state connect to the USBLN state affiliate, your Business Leadership Network and that you look at the companies that are really, really good at hiring people with disabilities and you look at your Federal contractors.

Now, we have a Campaign called: RespectTheAbility. Go to hashtag RespectTheAbility on Twitter, you can see some of the companies. All of these companies that are listed here, including, by the way, JP Morgan Chase which is the sponsor of this webinar, all of these have 100% rating from the USBLN and the AAPD on their inclusion of people with disabilities in their Workforce.

There's actually 19 companies in total that have that 100% rating. We're in the process of writing up profiles of all of them, so that other companies can really learn from these profiles. But you want to actually, before you write your plan, if you've haven't written your plan already, meet with some of these employers. Put together a meeting, and say to them: What do you need to make this successful? So that you can really have a lot more people going to these programs, and being

successful for you, and you will find that they will give you great ideas, but those ideas need to be in your plan.

And right now the State Plans that we're seeing are not reality-based, based on actual companies that want to hire this talent, and they should be mentioned. So where are you going to find the Federal contractors? Believe it or not, there is a website that breaks it down by Congressional District. Every different one of the contractors in your Congressional district who's getting Federal money and has the 503 requirement to be hiring people with disabilities, or attempting to hire people with disabilities, is on this website. So it's impossible that a State Plan is unable to sit with a Federal contractors because many of the people have told me: We didn't put it in the plan because we didn't know who they were. You know what? They're actually on the website.

So you can go there for free. You can get your list of all the people and then sit down with those companies and say: What do you need to have this be successful in terms of the talent that you're on-boarding? What is the talent needs you have now? And then take a look at what you're going to need in the next five years because we see with a lot of Federal contractors, that they have a huge bubble of people who are about to retire, and so within the next 5 years, they may have a huge part of their Workforce that is going to be leaving for retirement, and they need to be on-boarding the new talent and getting them trained now.

In fact, I'm going to show you right now on this slide, you see the biggest Federal contractors. These federal contractors are all trying to hire people with disabilities right now. And you know what they tell me? They tell me they're not finding STEM-qualified talent for these senior-level jobs that they have. And this is something that you need to have in your plan.

You need to be working with your school system, because right now, most states have magnet schools for people who are gifted in science and math and other areas, these STEM schools. They also in many cases have magnet schools where they have very good programs for people with disabilities. But you know what? They're frequently not located at the same school.

So some of the people who, for example, have autism who have been seen to be very, very good at pattern recognition, at computer science, at physics, at engineering, they're being told: You need to go to this school that has supports for kids with autism. By the way, that's not a school that has a strong STEM Program. You need to take a look at that.

In Israel, for example, in Israel, the Israeli defense forces, which by the way everyone has mandatory National service in Israel, people with Asperger's which is a part of the autism spectrum, are highly sought after for the elite intelligence units that have to do with computer science and engineering, and a lot of what they do there, that is not happening in our country, because frequently, we're not putting this career track into the school system young enough. So the education component has to be a really key part of it.

You're going to want to be looking for, you know, partners that will take a lot of talent over a period of time, again these larger employers like Hospitals and retirement homes. You know, we've got a baby boom and as the baby boom retires we're going to see a huge need for talent in senior living communities, and in hospitals and retirement Centers and should not be make-work and we're still seeing in some of the plans these "build it and dream" programs that hope that somebody's going to hire people. It needs to be very linked to the real situation, and the states should have a real employment-first vision that says that the schools' IEPs, their individual education plans, are leading to independence in jobs so it's not just we're going to put you in school until you're age 21 and then you're going to sit on your parents' couch collecting benefits until your parents die and then we're going to put you on your brother's couch until your brother dies. That is not success. We need to have this lifetime life plan of employment-first vision which many Governors have started to create, but frankly in many cases, so far it's not much more than just a photo opportunity and a press release. We need to really put meat on the bones.

And your WIOA plan is exactly the right opportunity to do that.

Now, I want to talk specifically about California. California's a good test case for all the states, so I'm glad all of you no matter where you live are looking at this slide. When I told you earlier that there's a slide -- there are a deck of slides for every state, every state has something like this. So let me walk you through this.

There are 71% of people without disabilities in California who are working age are employed, but only 32.7% of people with disabilities are employed. So you can see that enormous gap between the 71 and the 32.7. That's why we don't care so much about the unemployment rate. We want to look at the Workforce Participation Rate. That's the gap we want to see. The gap between the 71 and the 32.7.

How many people age 16 to 20 have a disability? Very critical to look at that 115,000 person cohort and very important to see, you know the larger number, the 1.8 million people who are working age, 1.8 million who are working age, it's huge. If you look at the number of people living on government benefits, 807,000 that is huge money, huge big dollars but at the end of this list you see voc-rehab only obtained 11,187 jobs for people with disabilities in 2012 so you've got the situation where you have 1.8 million people approximately with disabilities, 70% of them want to work and yet voc-rehab is only getting 11,000 of them into jobs.

So the new plan needs to be, obviously, much better than that, and the new plan has the opportunity to do it because now, people with disabilities can access all of the programs throughout the entire Workforce system, and this is really important.

So as you do it you want to be going with the Jackie Robinson strategy, so to do that, you look at the youth. You look at, who are the people ages 16 to 20? We're looking at California but again this exists for every single state.

So you've got the 115,000 that are with any disability but let's talk about the two on the left. People with a visual disability and people with a hearing disability, 10 years ago that was pretty tough situation to deal with in the workplace. But today, because of assistive technology, because of wonderful innovations, a person who is blind can use a computer flawlessly, and be a wonderful Team member in the office, as somebody who has got a sight disability.

Somebody who is deaf can use Dragon software and other capabilities. People who don't speak can use different kinds of assistive technology to help them so the people we're talking about the 23,000 young people with a visual disability, the 13,000 with a hearing disability. Look, if those people alone were getting into jobs, we'd be improving the numbers in terms of what voc-rehab is doing, but you look at ambulatory, you look at cognitive, and we can see enormous, enormous successes.

Now, I have to admit to you that when you look at self-care and when you look at Independent Living those situations can be more complicated. They're not necessarily as cookie cutter in terms of what the solutions might be, so I suggest you work with organizations like TASH and others that are specialists in some of the kinds of job carving or the same kinds of other things but for people with cognitive disabilities, that's 76,000 people there, you can do extraordinary things to enable those people to have real, real success, and we're going to talk about some of those things because they should be in your plans.

By the way, this is another slide that shows for the same questions for a different cohort of ages, but you can look and see what the issues are demographically in your state and you should know what they are.

You should also know the difference between people with and without disabilities in terms of poverty, smoking, obesity and employment. All those numbers exist for you in those decks that we gave you. And I also want to say that the federal government has the \$17 billion, but not every state is taking their piece of the pie, because for every -- the way it works, for every dollar that the State puts up, the federal government puts up \$4. 15 states left money on the table, 15 states returned money to Washington.

Take a look at this. Michigan had 19,000 plus -- million, \$19 million that they sent back to Washington. Look at Ohio. You've got \$18 million sent back to Washington. That's crazy.

Now, you see Iowa is on there, and it says that Iowa sent back \$2.3 million but you know what? That is not going to happen this year. That is not going to happen this year because smart people like David Mitchell, who runs the voc-rehab Program in Iowa, has figured out that you can absolutely get things to qualify for the match. You don't necessarily need new dollars. There may be dollars you're already spending doing things like transition from school to work that weren't properly categorized in your accounting system to qualify for your Federal matching dollars.

So again, these states have left significant money on the table,

significant, significant big money and you shouldn't be sending money back to Washington that was there in the first place to help people with disabilities get jobs. Again, it's a 1:4 match and you don't have to find new dollars. Sometimes you just have to account for what your state is already spending on these kinds of services.

There's a wonderful resource from the National Governors Association that they put out, the better bottom line initiative. This is a link to it. I think it gives some really helpful ideas. Our own planning Tool, this is our guide that we did with the other organizations that I mentioned earlier. Again, there's a PDF that you can just download here.

As we go through it, there's a lot of different resources that we offer in terms of the best practices. They're very much in sync with what was put in terms of -- from the Governors, so making the best of limited resources. Actually, let me walk you through some of these. And I'm going to do it quickly because Philip Pauli is sitting next to me and he can answer your direct questions. We're going to be taking questions from you about this process but let me walk you through some of these key things. We have a webinar on this topic that we did earlier and if you want to spend more time you can go through this more slowly through that or we're happy to speak with you off line but let me hit you some highlights here.

One is that the Governor and key state leaders really have to make this part of their public awareness. They have to be fully committed to this which means you need to meet with them. You need to ask them to be fully committed. You need to invite them to come see things. I cannot tell you how many times if you follow RespectAbility online which I think most of you do you can see we've met with and spoken with 100% of the presidential candidates and even these people who are running for President in many cases have never actually visited a voc-rehab Program or some of the best practices so you should invite your Governor and the head of the Workforce Boards and Agencies to come see the best practices and you need to really rely on them to help you with the PR Campaign about making hiring people with disabilities part of their strategies. There's a lot they can do to raise awareness through some mitts the Governors can do. Some of the Governors have done a tremendous job, whether it's the Governor of Nebraska or the Governor of many states, Washington State had something very good. Iowa has done very good forums. Take a look at your communications and your Staffing and your support. Take a look at whether there's a state supported Agency that is giving out the right information and that people know where to find them.

There's a link here to EY. EY is a wonderful company. It's a consulting company that has over 125,000 employees globally. Interestingly, Ernst & Young, Young was deaf. He also had some difficulty seeing, and so he from day one built into the DNA of their company that he didn't care what the package was that the employee came

in, just so long that they could do the job.

And so EY is really a company that more so than any other company out there perhaps is so good at working with employees in the white collar professional environment that have disabilities. They do a great job.

We did a webinar with Laurie Golden from EY that I really suggest to you. It's on our YouTube channel as another webinar you can listen to.

You should make it a part of your government Workforce strategy so that the government itself is working to make sure that it is an inclusive employer of people with disabilities, and we have a lot of suggestions on that there, and that should be in your State Plan specifically.

So should some of the market options that you're looking at, and working with the voc-rehab, and how people are doing it.

You want to really, as we mentioned earlier, work with parents and early education to have very high standards for young people with disabilities, and for their parents, to make sure they understand the options that are in front of them.

You want to really take advantage of school to work transition period, to make sure the IEPs and ILPs are really very forward-leaning. Project SEARCH, PROMISE, and others really are proven, like Bridges to Work, to get the great employment outcomes you want to see for people coming out of school.

I am going to take the time to talk about Project SEARCH because this is such a home run and every single State Plan should have Project SEARCH in it or a Project SEARCH type Program. Project SEARCH is a Program that takes young people typically not degree bound. They may be dislocated youth and they during the school year instead of going to school they go to an internship site where 10 to 12 young adults are working in the site. For an hour a day they're with their instructor or job coaches. Every other hour of the day they're doing their job, and the person from the school is like their job coach and is going through the work site making sure that they're getting the employment outcomes that their supervisors want them to achieve.

This is a tremendous Program, getting outstanding results. They do three different rotations thank you the course of the school year. It serves a population that on average, without this Program, we would have an expected employment outcome of about 20%. However, because of this Program, the graduates of this Program, we're seeing a 70% employment outcome, and that is really terrific, because these are young people with disabilities who you can really get into fabulous jobs in hotels and Hospitals and Nursing homes, typically working in the kitchen, working in cleaning, working in other areas like filing. Anyway, it's a tremendous Program. Erin Riley is the right person to be in touch with so I've given you her email. If you like to know more about it we also have a webinar on our website about Project SEARCH and more materials on it.

But this should be in every single state because now it's in 44 states and it's got 273 programs, but each Program is only 10 to 12 young people,

and the fact is that we need many, many, many more of them, so congratulations to the Governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, for example, because he used to have 3, and then he changed and now he has 27. So that means that a lot more young people who have intellectual and other disabilities that are pretty significant, instead of spending a life on their parents' couch collecting benefits and being unhappy and unhealthy they will instead have a place to go in the morning to have the dignity, the respect, the friends and the paycheck of a job. So I can't tell you enough good things.

But it should be absolutely designated and mentioned in terms of your plan and your State Plan.

You should have your State commitment to your accessibility and to your training. Why is this so important? Because you have this entire Workforce system of people that have been working helping people with barriers to work but they may be brand new to dealing with somebody who is blind or who is deaf or who uses a wheelchair, and they need to learn all about the latest and greatest in accommodations, accessibility, assistive technology, et cetera. And that needs to be again in your plan.

Your plan should not be limited to thinking somebody is going to just be an employee. It should also think about starting their own small business, and becoming an entrepreneur. Some of my favorite entrepreneurs are people with disabilities. In fact, Richard Branson, who owns Virgin Atlantic Airways, himself could not finish school, and is learning disabled. He is significantly dyslexic but unbelievably brilliant and creative and he started his own business largely because he knew nobody would ever hire him because he couldn't complete school. And so you can look at helping people start their own businesses, and that should be written into your plan.

Looking at the government employment, as I mentioned earlier, is important. There's some good metrics. Delaware is doing a particularly exceptional job on this. We did a webinar with Rita Landgraf, the Cabinet Secretary who's in charge of this. She's terrific. Other states like Minnesota and Washington State are working on this. But it's really good to look at State government and even County government can be very good. But there are a lot of issues that go into it so I encourage you to take a look at your leisure at some of these things that are in the PowerPoint, but also to go on to our Toolkit.

The marketing of the employment efforts and services is very important. And then I'm going to go back to your WIOA State checklist and I'm turning it over to Philip because he's just going to start taking your questions, because really, we want to be here to help you. And I also want to thank JP Morgan Chase again, for underwriting webinar because it's so important we be able to reach out to so I want to thank JP Morgan Chase for that but let's turn it over operator to questions and actually Philip can you fill in any gaps I had that off the bat you think I missed?

>> PHILIP PAULI: One is between when we prepared the slides and we uploaded them, Pennsylvania put out a copy of their State Plan and we

were alerted to this by the USBLN affiliate there. The deadline for that State Plan is going to be February 1st, and will include a link in the chat box right now.

Likewise, the State of Michigan also just put out their plan, and deadline for public comments on that plan is going to be January 31st.

So one of the big reasons we wanted to have this webinar today was we wanted to get people in Workforce agencies thinking about these issues but we wanted to really encourage disability organizations to what's going on in the Workforce stays space and encourage them to get out there and write their own comments. Yes, reviewing these economic plans is a huge thing, it can be intimidating but this is why we have our checklist. These are what we think are the most important issues that should be written into the plans and if you can look it over, combine it with the data we've prepared and add your perspective as a local Advocate or local organization that will be a very -- have a very powerful impact on the Workforce system in your state.

So all right, questions? Please use the chat box, and I'll read them out if you've got anymore.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Can you just explain also how somebody can be in queue if they're on the phone and want to ask a question?

>> OPERATOR: Participants who have dialed in for audio can press 7-pound, 7 followed by the pound sign, on their telephone key pad to indicate they'd like to ask a verbal question and we will call your name and unmute your line. Thank you.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So we're going to start. Go ahead, Philip.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Someone also posted a link to the plan from New York State with a deadline for public comments being February 8.

What is interesting -- all right, yes. So we're getting a couple good questions.

So Cindy, to explain the way this will work is there's two deadlines. There's a deadline the State is putting out and then there's a deadline that the federal government is putting out. Depending on the state, depending on what they put the plan out or when the public comments are due, that's why we've got the time line of different dates coming up. Missouri's public comments are due Monday. But kind of the overall deadline that each of the 50 states is facing is March 3rd. That's when they have to submit their State Plan to the federal government for it to be reviewed by the U.S. Department of Labor.

And even once we get to that deadline, we'll be moving forward, there's going to be a continuing need for the Workforce system evolve, to grow and meet the needs of job-seekers with disabilities.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Let me just also add that to read these plans can take a fair bit of time, and a real commitment but it's really worth doing, and that it's really good to try and divide it up with other groups to see if you can put together a State coalition of people that will look at it and don't think you have to be an expert on everything to comment about anything. You may have one particular thing that you're really,

really expert on, and you want to make sure that that piece of it is in the plan. You need to send in a letter.

If you're in the state of Missouri where the deadline is on Monday and you haven't read the plan yet, well now you've got the link and you can read the plan. The deadline's Monday. So you want to at least on letterhead be sending in a letter saying: We congratulate you for doing a plan. We want to be sure that the following things are in it and the things that are on this checklist here on page 45, you could just put, cut and paste those things into your letter and say: We endorse the following things, and hope that your plan will address all of these things.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Then the next question from the chat box is: Have you put together -- have you considered putting together a list of organizations that understand how to hire and provide accommodations for people with disabilities?

In the Toolkit, one of the specific resources that we always mention both in our meetings with Governors and in our Toolkit is something called AskJAN.org. JAN is short for the Job Accommodation Network. They're a really great resource that has a lot of links to organizations that do a lot of work around accommodations. They also provide a lot of employer resources. And whether it's PowerPoints about encouraging self-identification or looking at the role of assistive technology, how to pay for that, when you go to our website we've got several buckets of information. We've got a page dedicated to resources for policymakers. We also have a page on our website that's specifically for job seekers with disabilities.

And we also have a page for employers with disabilities so you can find a lot of information like that on our website.

And then from the chat box -- .

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: While Philip is looking at the chat box, operator, is there a caller who has a question?

>> OPERATOR: Yes, one moment, and I'll unmute our participant.

>> Hi, my name is Sharon Denson. I'm with the Connecticut Business Leadership Network, and I would like to know how the Business Leadership Network representing employers -- because this is so important that we are part of this -- can best be involved.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Well, hello to Connecticut. I hope you're doing well up there.

>> We are.

>> PHILIP PAULI: A very basic example of how you can get involved is that most of these State Plans have a list of the Workforce Development Board leaders who are critical members of the business community and State government.

[Phone ringing]

-- listed in the plan and that's kind of a very basic starting point. If you haven't already had conversations with these people who are listed in these plans as being key decision makers, you can reach out to them.

WIOA puts a lot of emphasis on partnership and collaboration, and in many cases, there may be funding streams through your local Workforce Investment Boards to support employers who are hiring people with disabilities or want to hire people with disabilities. For the employer side of things, when you're looking through the State Plan, you want to pay attention to the sections about on-the-job training, which is specifically going to guide where resources are put in terms of preparing people with a variety of barriers to employment to go into the Workforce needs of employers in growing job sectors.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So this is a really important question because here we have on the phone somebody who works for the Business Leadership Network. This is an organization devoted to nothing other than employers who hire and want to hire people with disabilities. So obviously, the people doing this plan for the State of Connecticut, just like every other state, should want that person, or those people, from that organization at the table to help them draft the plan, because this is exactly the thing that -- this is exactly the reason we're having this emergency call today.

You see, every Business Leadership Network should be sitting with every Workforce State leader who's at -- who's writing these plans, but what we're seeing is that that is not yet happening. So the Workforce Boards and the Workforce agencies need to call the Business Leadership Networks and the Business Leadership Networks need to call the Workforce Boards, Workforce agencies and voc-rehab. It's like a matchmaking thing, only it's way more important than a blind date, because there's billions of dollars being spent here, and these plans, once they are approved by the federal government, we're pretty much stuck with them for the next four years so you've got to have your plans around real-world needs for the job community, because if you've got a plan for the jobs that are there, and work with the companies that are on the ground that know what talent they need and what kinds of supports they might need in terms of apprenticeships -- apprenticeships are covered and can be paid for under WIOA, which is terrific. [Inaudible] go to a private sector employer and have a partnership with a school system, with a community College, with a University, and with the employer, and you could create something, and WIOA dollars can help fund that.

And that's very important, because -- and people can access that not just if they're in the voc-rehab bucket so to speak, but also if they're coming out of prison, they're coming out of foster care, they're coming out of extreme poverty or homelessness, and they happen to also have a disability, they should be able to go through that same opportunity, and so this is why, exactly why, we're having the emergency call, is because the idea that the head of a business leadership Committee, Business Leadership Network, isn't already a part of the plan shows that it's not the right plan.

It's impossible for it to be the right plan if these people haven't sat together and worked together on creating the best solutions that are

reality-based, based on the markets.

>> PHILIP PAULI: And I believe we have --

>> Can I say something? First of all, thank you so much for this. This has been fantastic. And by the way, I'm Executive Director of CTBLN, and also an individual with a disability. This is something that I'm finding as we're talking to -- that there is a disconnect often between service providers and employers.

And we're trying to bridge that disconnect so that employers are able to find the employees they need, and that service providers understand what we need. And it's as simple as that sometimes, and we want to make sure that when -- that people are sitting down to do the WIOA plan, that employers have a voice so that it is a successful plan.

And while I was listening to the webinar, I just shot an email to one of our partners, the Department of Labor at the one-stop center to invite us -- let us know we're interested, so thank you very much. This has been very, very good.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Great.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Thank you. I believe we have another person on the phone with a question?

>> OPERATOR: Not at this time. Participants can press 7-pound if they'd like to queue to speak.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right, we have a question from Kristin in Nebraska about whether or not WIOA funding can be used to pay for benefits planning across the board. Part of that will depend whether or not your state is using a combined State Plan which will include TANF and SNAP and Medicaid or using a unified State Plan, which is specifically just for the Workforce agencies, so, Kristin, I want to get to some other questions but you have my email on the PowerPoint, so please shoot me an email if you'd like to talk to me about this further.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Let me add to that that we definitely prefer if a state is doing a plan that is connected to using SNAP, TANF, Medicare-Medicaid dollars, because there are lots of different buckets of funding that you can blend and braid to have success, and that looking at this more holistically is going to give you the better outcome.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Then the next question from the chat box is from Ramsey in Wisconsin, and mentions he has had a Master's degree and involved with the Wisconsin Board for People with Disabilities. The Wisconsin State Plan is now available, and you can find it on the link.

As Jennifer mentioned, Governor Walker has been very good expanding Project SEARCH in his state going from having only two Project SEARCH sites to having 27 now and there's a partnership with Manpower Staffing Agency and expansion of the use of special education money to underwrite the cost of recruiting work sites. Other areas that Wisconsin can now look on now that they've got the baseline of really great school to work transition programs, issues around assistive technology, access to postsecondary credentialing, and another thing would be looking at the gap in universities between Disability Services and career services.

Because in a university or a college and even in a community college, Disability Services will be very much focused on accommodations and getting people scribes or helping with tests, and career services is all about preparing college graduates to go on, get an internship and get a job, and these two groups don't talk to each other and when the State Plan talks about encouraging partnerships in education that will lead to meeting Workforce needs, that needs to be part of the conversation.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: So let me just add onto that, because Philip mentioned Manpower. Manpower is a terrific partner for you to have in your State Plan, and you might say why? That's a for-profit company that's a Staffing Agency. Why would I want to use them in my plan? I'm looking for permanent jobs for people with disabilities. Here's the answer to that. We have found in a lot of studies that many employers are afraid to hire people with disabilities because they think it might not be the right fit, or they think that they -- their own managers may not be able to handle the accommodations, and they're worried that if it doesn't work and they fire the individual, that they could face a lawsuit, a disability claim, in court.

And so Manpower fills a wonderful niche in two states, in both Iowa and in Wisconsin, in that by getting somebody into a job that is -- where they're working for the temp Agency and it's temp to perm, temporary to permanent, that way the employer is not on the hook if tilt doesn't work. In other words you're not hiring somebody in a permanent way. You're hiring them temporarily through a temp service so in essence Manpower is the middle man that shields the employer from a legal liability later and also helps them because Manpower is very good at identifying talents. In other words, sometimes VR is good at saying or some agencies are good at saying: This person has a disability. They have a problem with X.

That they may be less qualified to do is to say: But they have a particular talent at Y and Z. And there is a need out there for Y and Z, and here's the company where we can place them on a trial basis, and see if it works. And we're seeing some nice success with this temp to perm.

Another nice success we're seeing in both Iowa and Wisconsin is there's a company called QuikTrip trip and I'm in love with this company. QuikTrip is a small company format where basically about 10 to 15 people work in a store. It's like a 7-Eleven or mini-mart where people can go and get their eggs and milk and gas on their way home from work. They identified based on a model done at Walgreens, Walgreens has been using people with disabilities to stock shelves and to work in their distribution center.

So at QuikTrip they have a job that is just 15 or 20 hours a week for a person with an intellectual disability, a DD, a developmental disability primarily, to do things like stocking shelves, or cleaning up the counters, that sort of thing. They have now hired 240 people, 240 people.

They have 500 stores. They're in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, and

it's just one person per store, and people think: Well, why would I want to bother having a Program that's only going to put one person in a store? Well, they happen to have 500 stores. And so now they're in 240 of the stores, and there's still another 260 that can take somebody in that sort of position. And some of those people have moved into full-time employment and been promoted within those smaller units, and so they're moving up the food chain.

It's a beautiful, beautiful model, and those sorts of things should be actually written into the Plan.

>> PHILIP PAULI: So we have another question from Cindy in Mississippi. She says that my state doesn't have a Business Leadership Network. What should I do to get one? The first and foremost step would be to find: Who are your employer heroes?

If you're a community organization, you should begin by looking at your contacts with voc-rehab, because voc-rehab is in the business of trying to place candidates in jobs so they have a sense of: Where are the companies that are hiring? And from there, also look at connecting with your State Department of Labor because the State Department of Labor is one of its many roles is finding out where the job sectors, where there's growth, where are people hiring? And there are many times business services -- business services Teams or specialists whose entire job is to find businesses and figure out what are their training or employment needs.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: But you can also reach out to the ones that are closer to you and I would start by reaching out to the National to Jill Houghton, the CEO of USBLN nationally for ideas, and in Mississippi, Governor Bryant is interested in these issues, and Graham Sisson is very good, who is working on their State Plan. We've met with other people from the state of Mississippi who are very interested in competitive integrated employment. Always be sure and look at your Federal contractors. Those are the people who have the obligation to have 7% of their employees be people with disabilities, in all job categories.

>> PHILIP PAULI: One of the key contacts you want to reach out to is the amazing Linda -- Lynn Kirkbride, the Director of Affiliate Relations for USBLN, and her email is Lynn@USBLN.org.

We have another comment from Rochelle. Talking about: Is all this information and our webinar able to be downloaded and forwarded to others. Yes, once we're done with this webinar we'll be posting this slide deck to our website and if you go to our policymakers page you'll be able to find it, download copies of all of the information on each state, and we're going to be -- this slide deck contains direct links to many of the State Plans that are already publicly available.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Right, and if you go to our YouTube channel, RespectAbility.YouTube.org. We have good webinars on this topic. We only recently got the sponsorship from JP Morgan Chase which we're very grateful for because that will enable us to do many more webinars. So if there are topics you're particularly interested in, that people on

this call really want to learn about, please shoot us an email. Because of the generosity of JP Morgan Chase we're going to be able to bring you a lot more webinars to be helpful. We know that 190 people signed up for this call even though it was at short notice.

We really did this because we really felt this was on emergency. These deadlines happen very quickly. The State posts the plan on the internet. We find that people frequently don't know that it's happening. The deadline to put in your comments happens very quickly. And so you want to really be on top of it. We will continually put on our website what those deadlines are, but take a look at the -- you can take a look at the slide that has the links to the different -- the different ones that are posted so far.

We'll continually update that, and put them on our website. But again, we've got a lot of deadlines coming up, incredibly soon. Let's take a look at them.

Again, Missouri is due on Monday. Wisconsin, due on Wednesday. California, Kansas, West Virginia, Oregon, Delaware, these are all due very, very soon. And the only way to be successful is for people to move on this very, very quickly.

And if you're part of a National disability organization, you're on with one state, you want to be sure to email this information to your colleagues from around the country, because I have been stunned by how many important people who should be at the table are still not at the table.

So for example, the BLNs, the business leadership networks, need to be at the table, and the advocacy organizations that are Advocating for competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities need to be at the table. You need to be writing in your letters, and putting in your public comments.

By the way, not enough to just do the comments. You can do -- ask for a meeting with a Governor, ask for a meeting with the head of the Workforce Boards and agencies. Meet with your Editorial Board of your newspaper, write a letter or an op-ed to your newspaper. This is historic Landmark legislation. \$17 billion a year will be following these plans, and so it is absolutely vital that they be the best possible plans.

Operator, are there any more calls on the phone?

>> OPERATOR: Not at this time.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Okay.

>> PHILIP PAULI: And, Kathleen had a question about: Will the audio of this webinar be on our website? Or just the slides and the documents?

We have been -- we have consistently uploaded video copies of our webinars to our YouTube channel. So you will also be able to find it that way.

Another question from the chat box was, Rebecca in Missouri talking about how Missouri is offering a lot of pilot programs for youth and students with disabilities, but the activities are typically separate from their developing peers. How do we hold our state responsible for

inclusion?

Well, this State Plan in providing public comments on the Workforce system is a good example of an opportunity, a forum to raise your concerns. WIOA has a lot of rules and opportunities around getting people with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment, and if there are programs and services which you feel are segregated or separate they are part of this overall system then you should be writing about it and talking about your personal experiences. We also included on this slide deck the op-eds we did this past Summer around the Americans with Disabilities Act anniversary. There's nothing more powerful in terms of changing people's opinions than a personal story.

So while we're dealing with some very tight deadlines right now in terms of the Workforce plans and submitting public comments, these issues will continue going on in the month ahead.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: I have met with Governor Jay Nixon of Missouri twice already. He's philosophically very inclined to be very, very helpful on these issues so you'll find that you have a ready and enthusiastic supporter but he got pretty bogged down with Ferguson and other issues. So you can raise it with the Governor.

I do know that their State Plan does mention Project SEARCH, which is terrific and it talks specifically about some of their sites. However, in my opinion, very much too few, that Iowa -- that excuse me Missouri has very few of those sites. Wisconsin has much more.

I think that Missouri should have way more of those sites, and frankly, California has historically really, really relied on sheltered workshops, and they really are not looking at integrated -- competitive integrated employment nearly enough.

We have a draft of our State Plan comments that we've already started so if you're on this call from California, please email Philip and we can send you a draft of our thoughts on that state.

But we as an organization don't have the capacity to do detailed comments on all 50 states within the time frame that these are all coming forward, so we're relying on those of you who are on this call to take this information and move it forward, and to help spread the word.

Again, \$17 billion will be spent. The only question is: Will it be spent on things that are good or things that are bad? And keep in mind that 15 states were so disorganized that they sent a lot of their money back to Washington, because they didn't even know how to access it and spend it. So you had states like Michigan and Louisiana and Ohio sending millions and millions of dollars back to Washington unspent, because they didn't put their planning in place that they needed to, to empower people with disabilities to get jobs.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Just to put that -- another lens on that, Louisiana, since 2008, has returned \$100 million that could have been spent to get people with disabilities jobs and that money has been sent back to Washington so that's an issue you can write your state legislators about, you should write your Governor about. And you should be talking with

the Workforce system and people in VR.

We have another question from the chat box, Steve says that there is no current BLN in Colorado. Well, Steve, what I would recommend is you take a look north to the state of Wyoming, and the indomitable Lynn Kirkbride, the Director of Affiliate Relations for the USBLN. The Wyoming Business Leadership Network has been doing very incredibly valuable things, have achieved some very meaningful outcomes, and they have a lot of great ideas about what states can do, what Advocates can do and how to get businesses on Board with hiring the talents of people with disabilities.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: And I have personally met with Governor Hickenlooper many times and many members of his senior staff. They have philosophically committed to doing a very good job. The issue is they frequently don't know what they don't know so it is quite important for you to take the Toolkit and go through and help them constructively with the suggestions so people are very forward-leaning on these issues. They want go successful. They want their plans to be good.

So it's not like this is an adversarial relationship, where bad, evil people are trying to keep people with disabilities down. It is not that at all. What it is, is the people do not know what they don't know. And so they're writing plans that have huge gaps, or missed opportunities, because they're used to doing things the way they've always done them, even if those ways are not achieving the results they need.

And a lot of times they're not even using data that is accurate. Again I just went to slide 6 again but I do suggest that you link to pull down your own state files that are so very important so that you can be reality-based.

How many people with disabilities are in your state that are working age? How many of them are in school that are transitioning from school into work?

>> PHILIP PAULI: And we have another question from the chat box. For each individual State Plan can you tell us what the plan's weaknesses are and what we need to request in comments?

I can't go in detail over all the plans I've been reading, so if you have specific questions about a specific state, email me directly at PhilipP@RespectAbilityUSA.org. To talk about California, the public comments for that is due next Friday, January 15th. For example, they're saying that the one-stop system will be our pathway for all services and supports. That's great, except that also means those are going to be spending resources on things that aren't programmatic accessibility. They may be concerning themselves with building ramps and elevators. Important parts, no less, but it's at what cost?

It's diverting resources and intention away from innovating, from capitalizing on the opportunities available through assistive technology. So there's a lot of issues and a lot of opportunities out there, and it's up to all of us together to push this forward.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: You can save a lot of money in a state by a

reduction of sort of buildings, and these mobile units where people go around with their laptops and they serve people, or these transition programs like Project SEARCH, and there's Bridges to Work and other terrific programs that are out there that are proven successful models to help people with disabilities get into the Workforce and there's also programs that have never, ever worked with people with disabilities that are good at getting people who are coming out of prison or coming out of foster care into jobs but they've never put the lens of disability into the Program.

So who is going to train them? Assistive technology so that if they have someone who's blind or who's deaf or who uses a wheelchair or who has ADHD or bipolar disorder, how to help them be successful. These are the questions you need to be asking.

There are 3,000 of these American Job Centers/one-stop shops, and we're far too wedded to the bricks and mortar and thinking about: Well, what we really need to do is put in an elevator and a ramp. You know what? The on-ramp may be: Let's think about the mobile units instead, and let's think about training our Staff in disability etiquette, and in recognizing talent, and let's go out and work with the Business Leadership Network to figure out, what are the actual real jobs that exist, and what kinds of skills and talent pipeline needs to be developed, to make sure the right talent is in line to take them.

I'm telling you, Lockheed-Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon are absolutely dying to hire people with disabilities, but they're finding that the schools are not putting out STEM-qualified people with disabilities, even though there are plenty of absolutely utterly brilliant people with disabilities who would love to go into STEM when they're young.

>> PHILIP PAULI: And another thing is the overall Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act puts a lot of emphasis on states looking at sector strategies. Now, what that means is the state is supposed to sit down, look through their economic forecasts, look through their economic history and figure out: Where are the jobs in the next 5 years, in the next 10 years? Whether it's hospitality or hotels, what are areas where people are going to be hiring?

And for example, public comments should really direct voc-rehab and other parts of the Workforce system to figure out: Okay, we have youth with disabilities. How do we get them jobs in those sectors that are growing?

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Right, and Christina who lives in a rural state is asking about advice for people with disabilities particularly where transportation is an issue. Look, I'm going to give you a piece of advice which is that VR should make a contract with Uber. Uber should be using people with disabilities to be drivers, for one.

People with disabilities can be trained to become Uber drivers, and Uber can be a transportation solution for people with disabilities to get to work, and they can have vouchers which can be something that is

a way if there's no public transportation, that can be terrific. Now, Uber has had some challenges, particularly from people with service animals and with wheelchairs, that not every Uber driver is ready to accommodate and willing to accommodate somebody who needs a wheelchair or who has a service animal. But they have since been working very, very hard on creating accessibility features and we have found that many, many people with disabilities find Uber to be a really, really good solution.

But again, it's something where VR could sit with Uber and make a strategy. They're a new company. They're looking to make partnerships, they've hired Tony Coelho, former member of Congress who has epilepsy to help reach out to the disability community so if I was VR I'd be talking to Tony Coelho about how can we talk to Uber about making that part of our transportation solution for our state.

>> PHILIP PAULI: That's again another example of an issue that could be raised in public comments you submit to your Workforce system because being able to get to a job or not being able to get to a job, that's a barrier to work and that can have a serious impact on the ability of youth, whether they're in the foster care system or youth with disabilities actually getting there and ultimately being able to pursue the American dream.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Right. So I think -- oh, somebody asked, what is Uber? So Uber is an online way to find transportation. So individuals can sign up to be Uber drivers, if they own a car. It's an app that they use on their phone or their computer and people can call them and they'll pick up people. It's like a taxi, only instead of being a formal taxi car it's actually private vehicles.

So it's somebody who may have a car that they use to drive carpool for their kids or they're a senior and they used to drive it to work and they're working part-time as an Uber driver. It's privately owned cars that are being used and what's great about it is it's frequently cheaper than a regular taxi and it is a place where people with disabilities could become Uber drivers, because it's a way to essentially become your own small businessperson and for somebody who does not drive and does not have a car it's a way to be able to get to work.

>> PHILIP PAULI: And then we had another last question from Steve about: Do you have any contacts you can share at companies like Lockheed and Raytheon? Please email me. My email is PhilipP@RespectAbilityUSA.org. It's on the first slide of this deck. I'd be happy to do some introductions if it will help you in your advocacy and work.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: They are desperate for partnerships and looking for talent right now so we really, really appreciate it. Operator, are there any final questions from the phone?

>> OPERATOR: No further questions from the phone.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right, then we have a comment from Steve about who works for state VR and has met personally with Jack Markell and Rita Land graph who are representations of state leaders who are

transformational as well as Randy Lewis from Walgreens. Please feel free to email me I'd love to follow up with you as well.

>> JENNIFER MIZRAHI: Here's somebody who's telling us he has all the best practices. He's met with Governor Markell and Rita Landgraf. He knows about an organization that helps people on the autism spectrum be in these technology jobs and he knows about Project SEARCH but he's not having the success that he needs to have with some of the higher-ups.

I can tell you that most of the Governors are very excited about this. Sometimes you have to jump a level and go to the Governor themselves. Sometimes you just ask for the Workforce Boards and the Workforce agencies but you have to ask the customers, the disability organizations, to be putting in comments. We'd like to see everyone to be sending in comments whether it's Easter Seals or Paralyzed Veterans of America to the local affiliates. RespectAbility is a National Organization. We don't have state affiliates, and therefore, we don't have that same state address going in for the comments.

So you need to rely on the disability community to really -- and self-advocates, people with disabilities, and family members of them, it's very important.

So at the end of the PowerPoint slide, we have a couple of -- hold on, I'm going to go all the way to the end here.

-- of resources that I think are helpful. Hold on. Sorry. I just want you to be sure to see the resources again, that these are some very helpful links including the U.S. Business Leadership, where you can find your Federal contractors. You can find a lot of stuff on the website. I also again want to thank JP Morgan Chase for sponsoring this but I want to let you know my email is Jennifer M@RespectAbilityUSA.org, and Philip Pauli, our Policy and Practices Director, is PhilipP@RespectAbilityUSA.org. Please don't hesitate to call on us. This webinar will be on our YouTube channel and you can find it there along with some others that I think you will find helpful but please don't hesitate to ask us for help.

Again we really are delighted to have you. So on behalf of RespectAbility, a nonprofit organization that is located in the Washington, D.C., area, I want to thank all of you who are on the call with us and who care about these issues.

I want to encourage every single one of you to submit comments. Do not feel, when you submit comments, that you need to comment on everything about the plan. If you only understand or are interested in one piece of it, and you have an expertise in one piece of it, be sure and comment on that one piece of it.

If you are in Missouri and the deadline is Monday, and you just found out about this, I encourage you to go to the highlights again that we pointed out earlier, and just sort of cut and paste and put it in a letter and say that I hope your plan has the following because this is important, and feel free to sit with me later.

It's a little bit like a hardship for people in the community because

it's almost stealthy that these, frankly, these plans are being put on these websites and people don't know about them and they don't have very much time. That's why we're doing this emergency call, because we saw that some of these plans, the right people aren't talking to the right people yet. And we really need to rely on you to help make that happen.

And so I hope that now that you've been on this call that you'll make that happen and you'll encourage other people in your community to be involved in this process.

So thank you again for joining us. I want to thank my colleague Philip Pauli. Want to thank the conference call company and all of you who care about these issues. Again if you have any questions don't hesitate to call us. Thank you, and this concludes our webinar.

>> OPERATOR: This concludes today's RespectAbility webinar. Thank you all for attending.

[End of webinar]

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