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RespectAbility Webinar

Education and Skills Building for

People with Disabilities

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>> PHILIP PAULI: Good afternoon, and welcome to the RespectAbility webinar for June 29th, 2018. Today we're going to be talking to education and skills building for people with disabilities. I'm so excited to be joining with you today.

As I was joking with my co-presenters today, this is a distributed ops version of a RespectAbility webinar. Part of our team are in New York City. Part of our team are in Washington, D.C., and one of the Board members who is going to be talking today is actually joining us by previously recorded audio recording, so I'm delighted to be with all of you today.

So this is the second part of our brand new initiative from RespectAbility. We have so much work on our hands, and so much excitement about the work that needs to be done to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities, for students with disabilities, to support families, that we are undertaking a brand new effort to recruit and put out into the world amazing volunteers such as yourself to go out there and change the world, to go out there and fight stigmas and advanced opportunities for people with disabilities.

So today we're going to be talking about those volunteers who might have a particular interest in education and students with disabilities. Educational attainment so tightly linked to economic and employment success in the workplace today, that there is a lot of work to be done for and on behalf of students with disabilities.

So per our comments, we're going to be starting out today with a recording from one of our wonderful Board of Directors members who is joining us by audio recording, Steve Bartlett. So Steve Bartlett is a former member of Congress, the former Mayor of Dallas. He has been the author of major pieces of legislation on a huge variety of issues including being the Republican Co-Chair and Co-Champion of the Americans with Disabilities Act. He's currently doing a lot of work as a Senior Advisor with Treliant Risk Advisors. And he has a great recording that's going to give you some of the bedrock principles of advocacy and engagement that we want you to hear today and to adopt and to carry forward into practice. So hit "play."

>> STEVE BARTLETT: So with that drum roll, I'll take it away from there, Philip, right?

>> PHILIP PAULI: Yes, please.

>> STEVE BARTLETT: Nice to meet you all by a webinar in the event. Let me start with I want to thank the people on this call for what you are doing, and more importantly, what you are about to do, because you across the country with grassroots help, you can make a huge difference in the understanding and the clarity and the knowledge base of both elected officials and candidates, and you will move the needles, so this is a serious proposal, and it can only be implemented by you, and thank you for that.

My own role is I've been in elected office three times. I was a Dallas City Councilman for an at-large seat in the state of Dallas, a member of the U.S. Congress representing Dallas for 8 years and I was a Mayor of Dallas, and in that, the life of an elected official is a public life, so you need to know that. Elected officials, whether it's School Board or legislators or Congressmen or Mayors or City Council, they really do get a joy from hearing from their constituents and learning, so this is not something that they will resist. This is something that they will want, the elected officials, will actually want to hear from you, because they learn something from it.

When I was in Congress, I had 18 public town halls every year. When I was Mayor, I had 60 or so public hearings every year. When I was a City Councilman, I had 12 town halls every year, and getting people to come to those town halls was-- I had town halls in which only three people showed up, and I had town halls in which 250, and it kind of depends on what's happening in the public at the time. So for you to go to an event will really make a difference.

I'm going to walk through some how-to, and then I'll turn it back over to Philip, and then we'll be able to take questions at the end.

First, what you say does matter. The information that you transmit and the way you transmit it will affect the thinking of an elected official. Now, you can't ask for an elected official to just simply hear what you have to say and say, "You're so smart, I'll just agree with you and do it the way you say it."

So what you're really looking for is a greater understanding of stigmatizing of jobs, of job opportunities, of independence for disability, you're looking for a better understanding on their part than they might have had in the beginning. So you take every elected official where they are and begin to develop that understanding, so what you say does matter. It will change the mindset of elected officials all over the country.

More importantly, what you don't say also matters, meaning that the only people that get heard in a democracy are the people that speak up, so if we don't speak up, then we don't get heard, and our side of the story of independence just never gets told.

So here's how you do it. First of all, you look, and I'll give you some suggestions. You put yourself in front of an elected official. There are several places to be in front of them. You want to be in front of them. You want to have as close to a personal relationship as you can in terms of communicating to where they see you, they hear what you have to say, and they then listen and respond to it.

So the way to do that, there are basically three different avenues, and you can do all three. One is-- oh, four actually. One is at what's called a town hall, and a town hall are those events usually at a school or an auditorium or recreation center in which the elected official has the hall. They put out notices for the public to show up. For that, you call the

District Office or their office, and you ask them: "When are your next town halls?" And you pick one, and you go to it. It's always better if you have two or three people going together, but it doesn't have to be. You can go by yourself, so that's called a town hall.

The town hall, what happens is the elected official makes some preliminary comments and then takes questions, so you don't want to be the first question, but you'll want to be in the first three, because other people will have something to say, and you want to be sure that you get focused. You don't want to be the first question because it makes you look too eager so you want to be somewhere in about the third question or something like that. Just raise your hand, stand up and tell them what's on your mind.

The flip side to a town hall, and I call the Rotary Club, so elected officials will speak to all kinds of civic organizations, Rotary Clubs, PTAs, all kinds of situations, so again, ask the District Office, ask their office: "Do you have any public meetings coming up that I can attend as a guest?" And they either will or they won't, and they'll either tell you they won't, or it will be on the website.

The third way is you literally can make an introduction to the office, to the Staff Director of the office, and ask if you can visit with the Congressman I'm just taking this would be a Congressman. Also could be a City Council member you can visit with them for about 15 minutes in their office, say: "I have some issues on disability issues I want to share," and oftentimes they will set up a time for you to come in and say your piece and you go in, and you have about 15 minutes, sometimes 30 but you should plan on about 15 minutes, say what's on your mind.

And the third way is a Campaign event when they're running for either running for election or running for reelection, and I'm going to put that off for a minute and come back to how to do that.

So what you do is you get there early. You want to get to the event 15 minutes in advance. Find a place to sit. Don't sit in the back. You don't have to sit on the front row, but sit somewhere in the center, so it's easier to see you, and in the first two or three rows, and then when the Congressman or the Councilman says, "okay, are there any questions?" Then you

basically, in a very friendly way, you ask a question, try to make it a general question that they can answer. You don't want to say: "How do you stand on H.R.2222," because that will embarrass them. They may not know what H.R.2222 is, but just ask them some generalized questions on "What are your view about jobs for people with disabilities?"

And then at that point, you can also express your view on what ought to be done better or different on that issue. You've got about 30 seconds to ask the question, no more than that. Really, if you can ask the question in 15 seconds, that's even better. You usually don't get a chance to ask a follow-up question, although sometimes the Congressman will say, explain that to me or what do you suggest? In other words, sometimes you can get a dialogue going, but you don't want to dominate it because there are other people in the audience that are waiting to get their question in.

Listen to the answer. Don't write it down while they're talking but just listen carefully to the answer, and then write down some notes as to what they said. And then after the meeting, go, and you'll see somebody on the Congressman's staff, or Councilman or School Board member, somebody's staff. They'll be the ones that will be scurrying around setting things up, and walk up and introduce yourself. Just say, "do you work for the Congressman?"

"Yes."

And then try to get his business card and give your card, okay? And that way, you have some contact information. And also, you can then follow up with an email to the staff member to say: "I want to emphasize what I said at the meeting, so that kind of nails it down."

Now, you want to do this in a non-confrontational way, in a friendly way. You do not want to assume, regardless of what you may think or may know to be true about the Congressman's voting record, you don't want to assume that he's against you. You just want to treat it as a blank slate, so you're trying to educate, you're trying to inform, and just assume good will on their part, and there will be good will, so whether or not they vote the way you want them to is a lot of different factors that goes into it, so assume good will. Your job is to educate.

Then we move from there to a campaign event. So a campaign event is currency of the realm. That's where members of Congress the best kind of campaign event is a what's called a campaign coffee, where someone will host the Congressman in their home and invite the neighbors. So you call the campaign office for those, and you say: "I want to attend a campaign event, do you have one coming up?" Not a fundraiser. You don't have to pay money. Just say: "Do you have one coming up?" Most of them do. If not, then that's their loss. Go to the event and do exactly the same thing. But it will be more of a social occasion. They'll stand around and talk a little while informally before the speech and the questions. You'll also get to ask a question.

I would encourage you to do both. A campaign event, you'll find the Congressman is more relaxed. He or she will know that they're among friends and will be more inclined to listen, so you actually want to do both.

We've talked about what to advocate, and RespectAbility will send you information. It needs to be-- you don't want it to be too specific, but you don't want it to be too general but have a pretty good idea as to what you want them to do as a result of the conversation.

Make it personal. If you then have a chance to give a 15 or a 20-second version of your story, how you got where you are, what you've done in your life, especially on the independence level, that makes it personal and that really helps. And then after the meeting, please report in. Send RespectAbility a report on who you talked to. Send the staff member that you talked to, the business card, what you said and what the Congressman said, and that gives us a lot of information that we can use on the National level.

It's fun. You will be exhilarated of the involvement, and you will make a huge difference in the way they think, so thank you in advance, and you're going to really enjoy this.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right, thank you, webinar team, for helping us facilitate Steve Bartlett's presence by previously recorded audio. Some of the essential principles of engagement, and participation, that he outlined are really applicable around the issue of promoting educational outcomes for students with disabilities. As he mentioned, getting involved with your local

School Board is kind of a bedrock opportunity for advocating and educating local leaders on disability issues.

So I want to frame, I want to call on Gerard Robinson next from RespectAbility's Board of Directors to kind of help us frame the overall situation in terms of education and students with disabilities. So just a quick snapshot of Gerard.

So he is currently the Executive Director of the Center for Advancing Opportunity. He's previously been a resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He's a researcher; he's an advocate. He has previously overseen educational systems in Florida, in Virginia. He's immensely passionate with good reason around the power and importance of historically black colleges and universities. He's a really smart guy, a very challenging thinker and I'm always delighted to have a chance to speak with him. So Gerard.

>> GERARD ROBINSON: Thank you for that very kind introduction. So he's absolutely correct, I am passionate about education, because I see it as the foundation for not only the workforce but also for how we as a nation influence politics, and we really need to make sure that we use the data that we have to make the point that people with disabilities are in fact capable, academically and otherwise to be part of the workforce. But in order to make that happen we need to talk about education.

And so it's true, I had the opportunity to work as a State leader in both Florida and Virginia. In Florida in particular, I had a chance to oversee the process that led to Florida receiving a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education as related to No Child Left Behind, but there were a lot of great things about No Child Left Behind that changed the conversation as related to people, and at this case students with disabilities.

However, we wanted some more flexibility, and in order to make that happen, I actually pulled together a Commission that focused on students with disabilities and students with special needs, and it was one of the better Commissions I had, because we had people who were advocates, educators, students themselves, now adults were involved in the process, and they really helped us craft how we either, A, changed the rule, B, introduced legislation, or, C, changed the information that we ultimately put in our document that was submitted to the U.S.

Department of Education. So just want to put that in perspective.

Now, let's narrow down what we're talking about. There are more than 57 million a people with disabilities living in the United States, which is 1 in 5 people, and the labor force Participation Rate at times fluctuated from 32%, while 66% of students with disabilities actually graduate from high school, and only 7% go to college. And the sad thing is, we have more than 750,000 people with disabilities that are behind bars.

So when we take a look at the IDEA screen in front of me, we identify that in 2015-16, the number of students ages 3 to 21 receiving a special education was 6.7 million, or 13% of all public school students. There's also students that are in Charter schools who also have special needs. Among students receiving special education services, 34% had specific learning disabilities, and so as the Congressman mentioned, when you speak to lawmakers, whether it's a Congressman or woman in D.C., or a local person at the County level, particularly School Board members, we have to make sure that we differentiate the type of disabilities that students have.

We use the term broadly, and I understand why we do so, but every--I can tell you as a fact, at the State level, when we have a students with disability line item, under that line item, we have different types of disabilities, because there's different code that we use for both State Federal funding, but also how we relate that to the School Board members and others.

And so when we talk to lawmakers it's important to let them know why this matters, and in particular, when you talk to staff in a previous life, I worked as a staff member to a Senator in California, at the State level, and to a State delegate in the Virginia Legislature. One was Republican, one was democrat. As a former staffer, there are three things I always wanted to know from someone who's going to talk to me about an issue. Number one, give me high-level statistics. The great thing about RespectAbility, you'll have that at your fingertips.

Number two, I love to know what this means outside of education. For example, when we talk about people with disabilities, we have to talk about the criminal justice system. For example, we know that one report identified again that approximately 750,000 people behind bars have a disability. We know from a 2011-12 study that approximately 3 in 10 inmates in state and Federal



prisons, and 4 in 10 in local jails report at least one disability. Women are more likely to report a disability than men, and white prisoners or those of two or more races report more disabilities than other groups. Regarding age, nearly 77% of inmates, 35 and older have at least one disability, and today's inmate is likely to have a disability in ways we have not seen before.

So linking that to something that's pretty popular as a topic, criminal justice is important. The third thing you can do and I'm going to echo what the Congressman said, is to share a personal story. Because we have 57 million people with a disability, it's a good chance that many people not only on our Board or staff but also who are part of this conversation, know of someone. I know personally of someone who was a schoolteacher. We had a student with disability. As a school founder, we had students with disabilities, but I also have my own family members, so sharing that kind of information will humanize and often just data-driven point. So those are some points I want to say before we move to the next slide.

Graduation rates. Now, I mentioned earlier that we have too few students with disabilities that are graduating from high school, and there are a lot of reasons they're not. If approximately 66% graduate, but only seven matriculate to college, that's a problem.

Now, take a look at the data we have from 2012-2013. We have a total public high school graduation rate of 81%. This information is from a more current study which shows 62%. And take a look at the states where we have too few students who are graduating.

So if you live in one of the states with a local graduation rate or you have a family member or a loved one in the state, use that as an example. You could say: "You know, I live in Virginia, but guess what? I've got a friend of mine who lives in the state where it's lower than 60%." And here's why I think that's a challenge.

It's not only a challenge from the education perspective, but at a point in our economy, where we have approximately 6.7 million jobs that are available, and we have 6.3 million people who, in fact, are looking for a job, so it's the first time that we've recorded this data where there's been actually more jobs than people, imagine the number of students and adults with

disabilities who if given the right resources, opportunity, and support, and also investing in what they're doing already for themselves, this could be a wonderful way of actually putting more people into the Workforce, because any Governor will tell you, and I've had a chance to work for a Governor in Virginia and Florida. Education, economic development, and jobs go hand in hand.

People will tell you, particularly employers, that when they look at moving their business from one state to another or moving a business from overseas to the United States, one of the five questions they ask is: "How strong is your K 12 system?" And they take a look at that. Because if they don't have access to great schools for their own employees or a school that can be a pipeline to jobs right after high school or colleges that can prepare them for jobs with that company, it could be a challenge. So look at this as education and economic mobility and jobs, as well.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Wonderful, thank you, Gerard. To kind of give you a sense of the disparities that are out there in terms of that high school graduation rate for students with disabilities, actually, if you just look at the raw numbers, Arkansas has the highest graduation rate for students with disabilities at 83%. My colleague Debbie and I are in New York City today, and actually, in New York City itself, their high school graduation rate for students with disabilities is only 45%. And it varies tremendously. So just for folks, the picture we have up on our website on the webinar deck right now shows on the top, National high school public graduation rates for all students.

And on the second picture of the continental U.S. plus Alaska and Hawaii, it's a graphic representation of those disparities. You have a cluster of blue states that have very high disability graduation rates. You have a scattering of other states with relatively low high school graduation rates, and these disparities really feed into the challenges and opportunities that we have.

We're really excited to get folks involved, and their local school systems to ask questions about: "What are you doing for job training for students with disabilities?" "What are you doing to promote high school completion for that population?"

And so Gerard, thank you very much, and we'll have a chance to circle back with questions for him, but next I want to pivot to

our next member of our Board, who is the -- from Board of Advisors, RespectAbility is lucky to have a Board of Directors and a Board of Advisors, on our Advisory Board we have the one, the only Ollie Cantos, who is-- well if you've heard of him before then you know Ollie. If you haven't heard about Ollie, here's a quick snapshot of who he is and I'll turn it over to him to talk about some of the great work he's doing at the Department of Education.

So he's working in the Office of Civil Rights. He's a presidential appointee. He is really a visionary leader within the Department of Education around students with disabilities and protecting their Civil Rights. In a past life, he worked at the Department of Justice. He has been hugely impactful in a variety of areas. I think his proudest accomplishment is famous for the adoption of three blind triplet boys who are the first blind triplet eagle scouts ever in the history of the Scouting movement. He's an amazing leader. He is a wonderful partner of ours, so Ollie, take it away.

>> OLLIE CANTOS: Thank you, Phil, and a wonderful good afternoon or good morning to all of you who are part of our volunteer corps. It is really exciting to have you be involved with us here at RespectAbility. Just to let you know, just from the get-go, I am talking with you today within my capacity as a member of the Advisory Board of RespectAbility.

And in looking at all of the volunteer opportunities that all of you are getting involved with, there are a number of things to keep in mind when moving forward in your local communities. And I'm going to be tying this into some things in a second.

But when you look at all that you do, always think about the things about which you are really passionate, and as you do that, remember that in telling the story of how it is that we, as people with disabilities of all types, need to have the same equality of opportunity of access as others, we can speak with passion about our belief in Fellow people with disabilities, and we also need to understand at a cross-disability level how we need to be equally passionate about disability issues across the Board.

I as a person who is blind will be equally outraged if I go to a restaurant with a friend who uses a wheelchair and we can't get into a brand newly constructed restaurant, when that doesn't have a ramp, let's say. Or if there's somebody with a

psychiatric disability, and somebody makes a disparaging comment because of old stigmas and stereotypes, or if somebody makes a false statement about persons with learning disabilities or intellectual disabilities, so we need to start from that standpoint with the fact that culturally, each of us has a direct role in making this work and our movement stronger.

It doesn't matter what political ideology that we have. It doesn't matter what economic background or race or color, or sexual orientation or any of that. What does matter most essentially is that all of us here are bound together by the shared belief that we, as people with disabilities, are deserving of the same rights and responsibilities as accorded to others, and with that, to help arm you, I wanted to tell you about the office for Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection, or CRDC.

That actually has been in place for 50 years, since 1968. What is now the U.S. Department of Education has been collecting the data, and it collects data from schools, from all across the country, from more than 16,000 schools and school districts around the country, and it literally covers aspects of education that are really important for all of us to study, including those who are-- who have IEPs or who are under a Section 504 plan, those who are of preschool age, all the way up to high school through every grade with secondary education. And it also addresses different elements ranging from access to STEM, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, to suspension rates to determine rates of discipline within different school districts, as well as racial and disability breakdown, and a number of factors.

And so the wonderful thing about the CRDC is that because of its comprehensive nature, you at a local level can look at individual schools. You can look at individual school districts. And you could even look across school districts and across an entire state, and there are special reports that are prepared that do data analyses and snapshots of different aspects of policy, so that you can leverage that at the local level, whether it be advocating for change with a School Board, pushing for change within a local school, or otherwise becoming a part of a broader National agenda to facilitate either policy change or program change, or enhance awareness about how all students are deserving of opportunity.

And of course, beyond that, too, that also includes, when we talk about students and access to education, we also have to look at the college setting, colleges, and universities, as well as other educational settings, such as vocational-technical schools that help train people through apprenticeships and other opportunities. We also need to look at internship opportunities, as well, in order for us to ensure that our students who come up through the ranks get the services that they need to have, so that they may be well prepared educationally in preparation for gaining effective opportunity to participate in whatever their career choices are, and then for them, once they have those internship opportunities, then to move their way into the workplace.

And so if we think about it, it's all a matter of pipeline that we need continually to arm Fellow members of the disability community by ensuring that a pipeline of students is coming up through the ranks, regardless of disability, and to ensure that all of them have the-- or to push for all of them being able to receive the same kind of supports.

But there's also something that's really important here, too. That includes the philosophy about disability. In spite of the work of the Disability Rights Movement, there still exists a number of stereotypes that exist about various of us with different types of disabilities. That's why we owe it to ourselves and to our fellow community members to be vigilant about standing up for what is right and educating people about what we truly are, and who we truly are.

It also means finding ways to build bridges across all spectrums in order to bring everybody to the table to help optimize the possibilities and the likelihood and the practicality of us uniting to support people with disabilities in different contexts.

So all of you who are part of this volunteer corps, I want you to understand-- I'm slightly going over, I'm going to have to wrap it up. But I want you to understand, we all want you to understand your personal role in all of this. The vital role that you play, not only as part of this bigger team but also right there within your local communities. The reason why we as an organization within RespectAbility are as strong as we are and the reason why we keep growing in influence and the reason why we do what we do is literally because of the strength that all of you provide. We have had an unprecedented number of

people coming forward to be support with volunteer corps with various aspects of advancement we're working to pursue and to continue to build and that is why, make no mistake of the value of being organized, of staying coordinated with us, of following through, of leveraging existing resources, of sharing information with one another and especially of breaking down any silos that exist between and among different disability organizations and we also need to look at intersectionality because beyond disability there are people who fall into every category literally: different religions, different racial backgrounds, different sexual orientations, gender, et cetera, we need to look at how it is that disability touches people in different ways and that it crosses intersectional lines.

And the more we see how we have a vested interest in uniting to support one another, to advance the philosophy and the cause of disability equality by recognizing how all of us, no matter what our stripes are, we are all united by our commitment to making that kind of a difference.

So I'll turn over the time back to Phil and open up time for questions whenever Phil authorizes.

>> PHILIP PAULI: We'll get to the question and answer period very soon. This is Philip, and I just want to say thank you so much, Ollie, for your passionate explanation of what this is all about, some of the resources and data that are out there and really the difference that we can make.

So we've had, you know, Congressman Bartlett talked about how you impact people that need, that you want to persuade. Gerard really framed things in terms of overall where we are at the state level and where there's points of leverage to have an impact, and Ollie has given us kind of the energetic, fiery spirit to really go out there and change things with the information from places like the Civil Rights Data Collection. There's a couple of examples of work our volunteers, we're asking people to do that I want to kind of walk through and how you can do it and why it's going to make a difference.

So becoming an Advocate is such a powerful opportunity, and some of the most, one of the simplest things you can do is to write an op-ed for your local newspaper. Actually just-- you know, the terrible events of yesterday at The Capital Gazette in Annapolis, Maryland, reminded us both, yes, the human capacity for evil, but more importantly, the fact is there are community

newspapers out there, of journalists who care about their community, who care about the stories of the people who live in their community, and that kind of connection is a powerful tool for empowering people and improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

So I really encourage you to get to know your local paper, if you're lucky enough to have one. Usually, local papers, state papers, have relatively easy ways of submitting an op-ed piece saying: "Hey, I have a story. This is my story of my experience as a student with a disability, as a parent of a child who's succeeding in the workplace."

Another example of something we'd love for you to do would be to go to your local School Board meetings. Most School Boards have public meetings. There's even opportunities for what's called public testimony or public comment wherein there's an open mic, and somebody can ask a question. The recording from Steve Bartlett talked about what kind of question you should ask and how you should ask it. And there are a lot of other ideas we have for how we can mobilize our volunteer corps to have a tremendous impact.

So if you're interested in the idea of an op-ed, you kind of need a news hook and honestly, it's the Summer, most folks, family, and students, school is the very last thing on their mind. But very soon it's going to be August, and it's going to be back to school season, and I'm thinking that if people want to do this, that writing an op-ed about, it's back to school season, what about students with disabilities? Here's some statistics on kids that graduated or didn't graduate. What are we going to do as a community? I think there's a great leverage to do that.

An example of the types of messages that you want an op-ed to get out there in the world, and this is an employment example is that most people with disabilities want to work. That 3/4 of the people with disabilities want independence and that it can impact the bottom line of companies.

Next page, one of the essential principles of a successful op-ed is what's called a message triangle. So the slide has a picture of an ominous black triangle pointing to three different things: A message about equality, a message about changing policy and a message about success. This is the language here is around employment, but you can come up with kind of an idea

of what you'd want to write in an op-ed about education. So our nation was founded on the principle that anyone who works hard should be able to get ahead in life. People with disabilities deserve the same opportunities. You could retool that to say that students with disabilities deserve the same opportunities to graduate and be successful as their non-disabled peers.

Talking about changing policies, talking about how studies show that most people with disabilities want to work and that policies can help people get and keep jobs. You could easily change that to say that students with disabilities can succeed. They can complete their diplomas, they can go to secondary education, whether it's an apprenticeship program or Training Program or Community College and that they can succeed. Lastly, if there are successful examples to bring up in the employment messaging, you'd bring up the example of successful companies.

But alternatively, maybe you know a school where you have a really amazing special ed teacher, and maybe you should point to them as an example of somebody who's doing good work for students with disabilities and raising them up. Those are the kinds of stories you'd want to say, as Gerard and as Ollie mentioned, we at RespectAbility have a lot of data that you can use.

So this slide is really little tiny, but it is a listing of every state, and statistics on education and employment for people with disabilities in each and every one of those 50 states.

We have a PowerPoint deck somewhere on my computer for Puerto Rico, so if you're from Puerto Rico, I have something for you. If you're from one of the outlying territories, I don't have anything for you, I'm sorry. Yet.

But go to our website, [RespectAbility.org](http://RespectAbility.org). Download some information about your state. Go to the Civil Rights Data Collection, and you can find out more.

If you're going to write an op-ed, keep it simple. Use straightforward language, share your personal experiences, double check the facts. And always use person first language.

Remember, you've got to keep it simple so make sure you have no more than 3 or 4 facts to back up your arguments and when you're writing it, keep it really short. Most local papers, most state



papers require less than 500 words, and that's a pretty easy lift when you think about it.

When you want to go to press if you don't know where to go, contact us. We have information on press outlets in every state. And so if you don't know where to go, we can help you find it.

All right?

And then if you want some examples, go to RespectAbility's website and search for things like false stereotypes of people with disabilities, holding employers back. There's a great piece in The Huffington Post from Governor Jack Markell. If you want to look up something that Steve Bartlett co-wrote, look for an article called Forward Push on Disability Rights. That is a great op-ed that talks about including inclusive philanthropy to include people with disabilities. There are a lot of examples of great writing you can't copy, you can't plagiarize, but it can inspire you to write your own story and share it out there in the world. So, how are we going to do this? How are we going to change the world through our volunteers, through building out our impact in the community, building our capacity for outreach?

Well, it is my pleasure and distinct privilege to introduce you to my colleague, Debbie Fink, who is the Director of Community Outreach and Impact here at RespectAbility. And so she is going to be our Coordinator, our facilitator, our queen bee of volunteers moving forward. If you have any questions or comments on what it means to be a volunteer, what it is involved, she's your person.

>> DEBBIE FINK: Hi, welcome, everyone. And we are so pleased at RespectAbility that you're joining the ranks as we launch our volunteer coordinator nationwide and you're part of a pilot study as we build and hone best practices of this time. So this end, we're really committed to eliciting and listening to your feedback and making necessary changes as we grow our volunteer corps from sea to shining sea.

I had to throw that in there. It's really close to July 4th.

So I'm here to answer questions, and so maybe you want to...

>> PHILIP PAULI: -Yeah, so very quickly, if there's anybody who's on the webinar today who has a question, you've got a couple of options for asking questions of the group.

First and foremost, you can type in the Q&A box on the bottom left, on the left of your screen there's also a chat box and then, operator, would you kindly explain to anybody joining us by phone how they can ask a question by phone?

>> OPERATOR: Yes, ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to ask a question, please press 7 pound on your phone now. Sorry, that's 7 pound on your phone now, and you will be placed in the queue in the order received. Listen for your name to be announced, and ask your question when prompted.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Wonderful. Thank you.

>> OPERATOR: Go ahead.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Yes. So we already had one question come through the chat box about, "is there going to be a copy of the PowerPoint?" That would be a "yes." I'm going to email it to everybody after we're done here today. I'm also going to email folks a copy of our draft partial, incomplete working version of our volunteer corps handbook. We are very eager to get feedback, and we invite you to let us know what you like, what you don't like and how we can improve it.

So we'll get to that in a moment. So until I see a question in the chat box, I have my own kind of outlines of what we want to ask. So, Debbie.

>> DEBBIE FINK: Yes.

>> PHILIP PAULI: How much time should we expect a volunteer for RespectAbility to contribute? Or how much time is it going to take?

>> DEBBIE FINK: Great question. So before I answer it, though, I just wanted to give a shout out to Ollie and Gerard. Thank you so much for sharing your incredible knowledge and wisdom with all of us. We really appreciate it, and we appreciate the volunteer time that you contribute to RespectAbility and the mission.

So the benefit of being a volunteer is that it really is you who determines how much or how little time you are able to invest in the effort. With that said, once you commit to a time-sensitive

task, we do expect follow through and/or to hear from you with enough time to reassign that task or to pivot and we'll be putting in a system where volunteers will ideally be able to turn to other volunteers to pick up slack where somebody can't do something last minute. Life gets in the way of living is what I like to say.

So your time commitment is your choice.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right. So for folks who want to get involved, what are the next steps in this process?

>> DEBBIE FINK: So we have been working diligently on creating a volunteer corps handbook, which is in draft form, and actually as a volunteer, one of the first things you might want to do when you read this draft form is to provide us with comments and feedback to tell us what's working for you, what's confusing for you, et cetera.

So the draft will be or is...

>> PHILIP PAULI: -It's going to go out in an email to everybody who's on the webinar today.

>> DEBBIE FINK: You'll receive that, and we want you to read it thoroughly, set up a call with me so we can determine mutually beneficial tasks. In the handbook, there are you have to sign three documents in order to begin your volunteering, and those documents will eventually will soon be available online, as well, and we need to receive them signed before you begin.

So it's a five-step process to begin. One, download the handbook. Two read it. Three, set up a call with me. Four, sign the three required documents. Five, make sure they are sent in. And then you can roll up your sleeves and get going.

But actually, even before that, your first task could be to give us feedback on the handbook itself.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Gotcha. Thank you. We have a chat box question from Paul Hopgood who's curious about: "why is it important to write an op-ed in your local newspaper?" We highlight that as an example of something that's relatively quick, relatively easy but relatively impactful.

Honestly, we have to get the message that students with disabilities can succeed, that students with disabilities want to succeed. And that would we have a kind of a moral

responsibility as people who want to see a better world to make sure that all of us have the chance to contribute our skills and our opportunities to make sure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected. And writing an op-ed is a relatively quick and easy thing that can maybe change somebody's mind.

>> DEBBIE FINK: It could be a principal who reads it.

>> PHILIP PAULI: It could be a School Board member. That's why we think it's a great opportunity for some of the folks out there today. So, Paul, thank you for asking that. We have another question from the chat box. Pam Daniel is asking: "do you have a public relations calendar that would serve as a way to coordinate volunteer efforts?"

>> DEBBIE FINK: That's great. We're in the process of putting one together. Pam, you are hired, not hired but if you want to volunteer your time to give us input as we develop that, that would be great. Because it's very, very important to have that calendar that we can coordinate, communicate, collaborate, and make things happen.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Gerard would like to step in and add to the comment about op-ed, so Gerard?

>> GERARD ROBINSON: Here's why an op-ed to a local paper is important. A year and a half ago I was speaking to a group of scholars at universities, and they say their information is really important, but unless you go to the Journal, no one's going to see it. I said, take what is often arcane information, put it into about 600 words, make it regular people friendly, and submit it to your local paper. You'll never know what happens.

Lo and behold, one of those scholars from Arizona contacted me and said: "Your idea actually worked. " A State Board member of a body in Arizona read the op-ed, sent the scholar an email. The scholar was then asked to come to testify before the Board. So that's one way it makes a difference.

As someone who had a Board meeting at least 10 of 12 months a year, I can tell you, there were people who would testify, and it would make a great difference, but those who would say, I testify, here is my testimony, or here's an op-ed that I wrote, that kind of stuff makes a difference, because trust me, State Board of education members are pretty busy but having 600 words

or so put into a local paper that they read, and trust makes a difference. So trust me, it's small, but small things often ripple to big waves.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Thank you, Gerard, very well said. So operator, do we have any phone questions?

>> OPERATOR: There are no questions at this time from the phone.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right. No worries. So question: Debbie, how will volunteers monitor their time and report for feedback to RespectAbility?

>> DEBBIE FINK: Okay, so we are setting up again, it will all be online in the very near future, but there will be a form that we request each volunteer complete monthly such that we can track your hours. It's good for you. It's really critical to us, because funders really like to see that volunteers are putting time into it, and every volunteer hour is the equivalent to X number of dollars that a funder has not had to put forth, because so it's really important to track your hours, and that will be in play.

The other thing we'll be doing is, we want your feedback. We're aiming at 4 times a year. We're calling it the Volunteer Valuation form, because we value your time, we value your input, and it will be anonymous so that we can really get candid and honest information, because this is an ongoing process, and while we're hoping to onboard you now, the key part of volunteer management is listening to our volunteers, getting feedback, making adjustments and tweaks that will only make everybody's role in RespectAbility better and more effective.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Wonderful. Thank you, Debbie.

>> DEBBIE FINK: You're welcome.

>> PHILIP PAULI: So question: So how will volunteers be recognized for their work and their contributions?

>> DEBBIE FINK: Well, first of all, with a lot of gratitude from us. We really believe in an attitude of gratitude. And the mere satisfaction that you're knowing you are making a difference in your community and nationwide for people with disabilities. In addition to that, over time, we are hoping to set up or to identify, individuals to play the role of State Representatives, which we'll get there, but we're not there yet,

and over time, we really are aiming to then recognize the Volunteer of the Year for each state, and then from those honored volunteers, we would select a National Volunteer of the Year who we would honor at our National event at Capitol Hill, an annual event at Capitol Hill, and to lift up and recognize that Volunteer of the Year in that location and capacity, which segues into, drum roll.

>> PHILIP PAULI: July 30th. For the folks in the D.C. Metro Area, we invite you to come and join us. I just put in a link in the chat box. We invite you to attend a really great event we've got going on, on July 30th, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. It's called: From Washington to Hollywood and beyond: The future of Americans with Disabilities. It's going to be a really great day-long event where we're going to be presenting awards to Joe Shapiro and Judy Woodruff for their amazing reporting on disability issues. We'll have great panels to talk about fighting implicit bias through film and television. We'll have diverse folks talking about empowering people with disabilities in the workplace, some of the transformation that's going on from the Department of Education and the Department of Labor, as well as members of Congress. We're going to have the entire Cantos clan talking about their experience as eagle scouts and breaking the glass ceiling. We have a very diverse panel talking about intersectionality and people with disabilities, because as Ollie brought up, disability cuts across all other categories, across race, across ethnicity, across religion and there's a great chance to meet our Board, to meet our Board of Advisors, our Fellows, our staff and get a really great sense of what we have in store.

>> DEBBIE FINK: And I'd like to add to that, first of all, you don't have to be from this area to attend, so if you have family or friends in the D.C. area that you think it's time to visit, make sure the visit is around July 30th so that you can join us.

It is free. We will be providing lunch and a reception at the end. It's going to be a great event, and we'd love to see you there.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Yes. I'm actually going to call on Ollie if that's all right. Ollie, you are one of the savviest social media users I know. I'm curious, can you talk about ways that folks might be able to use social media as an advocacy tool?

>> OLLIE CANTOS: Yes, absolutely, and thanks for the question. One way to use social media very, very quickly is to begin building a profile where instead of accepting people's invitations, you actually send a note back to each one of them, and what happens there, when you do that, is you begin to build relationships with people, and you could actually-- this will be for another time, but there's also a way for you to incorporate video into your response and so forth.

But when building social media, it's important to leverage it to tell different stories, and that doesn't mean that you have to come up with content completely on your own. If you see information from advocacy organizations and you want them to forward, then you need to do that by-- sorry, there's background noise.

Another thing that's important to do is to look for organizations that you support, and to forward information including from RespectAbility, whenever there are calls to action. Don't just post it or either Retweet it or just share it, but actually put your own personal introductory comments at the beginning, because if you do that, because of your personal relationship with people, they will see that it matters to you personally, and when they see why you're forwarding what you're forwarding and they see your personal interest in it, they will be compelling.

The other thing to do, too, is to build individual relationships with people on social media by personal contact. Don't just post, but also comment, and look for things that are interesting.

One thing that Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi does, our President, she's really magnificent at this, is whenever there are specific stories that she thinks would be of interest to people, specific folks she knows on Facebook, she tags them and then it gives people a way to reconnect with her, and yet also to have value added to their lives because of something she shares with them. And plus the best part of all the social media stuff, it's all free, and you can build and become a major influencer and have thousands of followers or friends or connections on social media just through these efforts.

And we can go into this more extensively at another time too if you'd like.

>> PHILIP PAULI: Perfect, Ollie. Thank you very much for sharing that.

So one last call to-- do we have anybody on the phone?

>> OPERATOR: Hi, there are still no questions from the phone.

>> PHILIP PAULI: All right. We've clearly answered everything that needs to be asked, right? Anyway, all right, well, I-- there being no other questions, I want to hit my gavel and wrap up today's session.

Thank you, Gerard. Thank you, Ollie. Thank you, Debbie. We are an amazing team. We're going to have an huge impact. And Steve Bartlett in absentia, so we are so delighted to have this chance. We've elicited a lot of great interest, so we're going to turn that interest into action, and we're going to make an even bigger difference thanks to all of you. Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you to our captionist, thank you to our ConferTel team for facilitating this webinar today.

We are as I said here on the road, we'll be headed back to D.C., so bright and early Monday morning we will be following up, and we'll make sure everybody gets the PowerPoint, everybody gets the volunteer handbook and for that, thank you very much. Have a great weekend, good night, and good luck.

[ End of Webinar ]

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