Steve Bartlett: Welcome to RespectAbility's ADA 30 celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The thousands joining us today include those not only from the United States but also globally. We are pleased to have you join us, all of you. My name is Steve Bartlett and as the chair of RespectAbility, I'm delighted to serve as your host for today. RespectAbility, as you all know, is a nonprofit organization that fights stigmas and advances opportunities for people with disabilities. We are led by diverse people with disabilities and their allies. RespectAbility knows that people with disabilities and their families have the same hopes and dreams and aspirations as everyone else. On to the heart of the matter. RespectAbility, and many of you on this call, accomplish our mission with a three-part strategy. One, fighting stigmas by promoting diverse, authentic, and accurate portrayals of people with disabilities. Two, advancing opportunities by identifying and promoting best practices in education, employment, civic engagement, and access. Three, leadership development to strengthen the talent pipeline of people with disabilities. I'm sure you will see this strategy of positive change with the amazing speakers and information you will be seeing during these five days of events and today. We are grateful to our sponsors and let me say that these sponsors help to support RespectAbility throughout the year. Not just with financial support, although they do, but also to provide us content and resources and access. And those sponsors are Comcast NBC Universal, Sony Pictures Entertainment, The Walt Disney Company and Murray/Reese Foundation. They made today possible particularly. We are pleased so many guest speakers and you have chosen to join us. Now, today focuses on advancing opportunities. Our theme today is the future of work for people with disabilities. There are more than 22 million working age people with disabilities and today, only one in three has a job. We will now learn from the top experts in the public and private sectors who are enabling employers to thrive by bringing in the talents of people with disabilities and learn what more can be done. So to kick off this panel, I am turning over the Zoom to RespectAbility's policy and practices director, Philip Kahn-Pauli. Philip will introduce our panelists and we'll get this conversation started. So Philip, you're on.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you so much and thank you so much for everyone who has joined us. Thank you so much to our panelists. One last quick housekeeping item, I will just say that -- one of the most important lessons I have learned from living and working in the era of COVID on disability employment issues is the importance of patience and flexibility, and I will need to ask our audience's patience and flexibility today because we are short two panelists. We are short Tina Williams from OFCCP and later we are short Janet LaBreck, RespectAbility board member and thought leader on vocational rehabilitation services. They have both been called away by other responsibilities and we wish they were here but we will do our best to talk through everything they would have covered. To quickly introduce our panelists, I'm going to start with Dr. Craig Leen of the Office of Federal Contract Compliant Program (OFCCP). This office is critically important within the world of disability employment because it is specifically around issues related to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. At OFCCP, has really been thought leader in helping drive through compliance federal contractors to become more inclusive of people with disabilities and their talent pipeline. He is a scholar, he's a thought leader, he's a teacher, and he has been working hard to make Section 503 work for as many federal contractors and workers with disabilities as possible. Also joining him from within the Executive Branch of government is Mark Schultz from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Education. He is also the acting assistant secretary and commissioner of the rehabilitation services administration which oversees billions of dollars in funding to get people with disabilities to work. I will also shout out, this is not the only anniversary we are celebrating today. Beyond the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, this year is also the 100th anniversary of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, going back to the legacy of World War I. So he is the senior service of disability employment and has previously served as the leader of vocational rehabilitation in the state of Nebraska. And there, I am pleased to say that Nebraska has consistently had one of the highest employment rates of people with disabilities of any state in the country and he now brings that leadership at the federal level. Rounding out our panel today is Shane Kanady, vice president of Workforce Development at Source America. He is a thought leader and really hard worker in the world of economic and social inclusion for people with disabilities. He has been with Source America for many years, has risen through the ranks. He's very involved with issues related to the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. He is also a published author with several very thoughtful pieces on the future of work and has been wrapping up some additional studies at George Mason University. So Shane, thank you so much for joining us. I mentioned the anniversary of the rehabilitation services, as well as the ADA and I bring that up because both 1920 and 1990 are very different years from 2020. And so Mark, I would like to call on you first. Given the very different world of work and the very present reality of this pandemic, I am curious - what do you see as some of the successes, some of the positive stories or positive work that have been done to get more people with disabilities into the workforce, even nowadays?

Mark Schultz: I think obviously – and first of all, I want to thank you Philip for mentioning the anniversary so those of you that have heard me speak in the past, I think it would be no surprise that I was intending to bring that up as well, that we are celebrating the 100th anniversary, and we actually have a very deep connection with the ADA, as you know. Because section 504, contained in the Rehab Act of 1973 really was one of the first civil rights laws addressing the protections for individuals with disabilities from discrimination, and was essentially the foundation for the ADA. So we have a close connection and I'm glad to be a part of the celebration today. Some of the successes, I think in terms over the years, the VR programs have really had to respond to changes in the environment and things that were happening around us. So we've had to innovate and create-- be creative over the years. And the COVID 19 pandemic has certainly challenged us, and as we look across the country we are seeing many of the programs have responded admirably to meeting the needs of individuals through remote service delivery, including telework for their own staff and employees, so – They've had to innovate and at the same time, we have also seen a lot of opportunities with employers. And that varies based on the career fields, obviously, but there are opportunities out there and our programs continue to reach out to employers and continue to make matches with qualified individuals.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful. thank you. Shane, I want to go to you next and ask you that same question. Very different year we are in now, but where are you seeing successes and where do you think we could be as a field more successful in getting people with disabilities into work even with the current economic conditions?

Shane Kanady: Thank you, Philip. So, a couple of examples I have seen recently, and have been fortunate enough to be involved with, a recent symposium by XR Access. XR standing for extended reality. And from a macro level, it is bringing together users, developers, investors and policymakers around emerging technologies. And how do you leverage extended reality as a means for opening up the labor force participation especially as these trends are accelerating due to the pandemic? I think that is a really exciting opportunity. It's really notable, a bright point of something that's happening. From a micro level, groups like Vanderbilt University's First Center for Autism Innovation, using virtual reality as a means for honing interviewing skills for persons on the autism spectrum, but also for employers on the other side of that. And then there are so many opportunities to then take those examples and find ways to amplify them through organizations like Source America and other disability community groups. So using virtual reality for experiential learning, using augmented reality for employment and employment supports, looking at things like user experience testing performed by persons with disabilities. All of these emerging technologies need to have an inclusive approach to their design and their function, so who better to do that then persons with disabilities? This provides a great employment opportunity as well.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful, thank you Shane. Craig, we're going to you next. Again, 2020 is a very different year than 1990, or 1973 or 1920. So, where are you seeing successes and what are some of the things you want to highlight to the wider world of disability employment?

Craig Leen: Certainly, thank you. It's a true pleasure and honor to be here on the week of the 30th anniversary of the ADA. OFCCP has committed this fiscal year to significantly enhancing everything that it's doing to enforce section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act. And we're building on prior administrations, prior directors, prior policies to do so. Many of you know that the agency has been very focused on the 7 percent employment goal for federal contractors in section 503. What we are trying to do though, is expand that, to also look at compensation, promotions, opportunities generally, federal contractors to be inclusive in every aspect of the employment process. And we ask those in HR, those who are corporate leaders, to really take to heart the goal that we need to be fully inclusive of people with disabilities in all aspects of employment. So what we are seeing during the COVID period, and we do have – during the pandemic and we do have sort of a unique perspective because we're in the midst of doing our section 503 focused reviews which is one of our enforcement mechanisms. We've ordered 500 reviews of federal contractor headquarters, some of the biggest companies in the United States and some of the biggest companies in the world. Going in and looking at their corporate headquarters, looking at their policies and practices for inclusion, and what we're finding – and I think this is very positive even amidst the pandemic and even amidst a lot of concern about higher unemployment rates for people with disabilities – we do see companies that are federal contractors taking the lead in adopting inclusive employment practices. As I mentioned, we have been conducting these 503 focused reviews as we speak. Instead of going on-site and physically inspecting premises, we are doing things virtually and by interviews and also looking at the records of companies to see how they're treating people with disabilities and doing interviews with corporate leadership and what we are finding is that companies are adopting the best practices that we have suggested on our website. And for those who don't know about that, I highly suggest that you go on the OFCCP website. You can do a web search, just put OFCCP focused review landing page, or section 503 focused reviews, and you will see a list of approximately 15 best practices from the agency. Things like a centralized accommodations system, suggestions for how corporate leadership can give welcoming messages to people with disabilities, suggestions on how to construct disability inclusion programs, disability hiring programs, autism at work programs, suggestions for how to engage with vocational rehabilitation agencies in your state and locality. How to engage with OFCCP so that we can provide you compliance assistance so you can go above and beyond the requirements of law and doing outreach to individuals with disabilities. I still would say we have to be keenly aware as well of the statistics in this area which are getting worse because of COVID. Typically as you all know, and you referred to about one third of people with disabilities having a job, the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities continues to be lower - far lower than it should. It's about one in five, whereas it is about three in five for the general population. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is typically double the general unemployment rate and as you can guess, as unemployment has been going up because of the pandemic it is going up more so for people with disabilities. And the wage gap which I feel does not get mentioned enough is over 30 cents on the dollar, maybe up to 40 cents on the dollar for people with disabilities. These are things that need to be comprehensively addressed and it is really advantageous to the American economy to engage with individuals with disabilities. It is an untapped source of significant talent. We know for a fact that between one and four and one in five people in the United States have disabilities and we need to be tapping into that resource. And as you mentioned before there is a great resiliency in individuals with disabilities who as you can see based on these numbers, have experienced discrimination in their life and in the workforce, and yet continue to succeed. So there is a great benefit for federal contractors to do outreach to individuals with disabilities. Not only is it required by law - let me repeat, it is. If you're a federal contractor you need to be doing outreach to people with disabilities. You need to be seeking to get to that 7 percent utilization goal across your workforce, but it's beyond that. OFCCP is going to be moving into new areas. We're gonna be looking at compensation and promotion discrimination, as I mentioned, similar to how we look at race and gender. OFCCP is well known for doing compensation audits based on race and gender and we're looking at our focused review program in appropriate circumstances where we see an indicator or a problem area to do it in those focused reviews as well. We are hoping to incorporate this into our entire program. But you shouldn't just do it because the enforcement agency says so. You should do it because it is the right thing to do. And the main point I want to make is you've got to be mindful, not just of the hiring and utilization, but of promotions and opportunities. Because one of the things - I have two children who have been diagnosed on the autism spectrum. My daughter has a very profound intellectual disability and is on the autism spectrum and I have fought for accommodations for her in my personal life for years. It's one of the reasons I am in this job, and why I feel so passionately about these issues. But one of the things that is often said that about, for example, individuals with autism or individuals with disabilities generally is that well, it is good to hire individuals with with disabilities because they say in the job longer. Well, that's true actually, the stats show that but that is not necessarily a good thing for people with disabilities in the long run. Because what often happens is if you're in a job because you have been granted an accommodation and you're happy with your situation and it is hard to move because of the low labor force participation rate and high unemployment rate, it makes that protected class subject to discrimination or exploitation because companies know that they may not move as easily as others. And we're counting on you as leaders of your agency to be doing reviews that compensation and promotions to make sure you're treating individuals with disabilities the same as others. And hopefully, we will have a day, one day, hopefully soon where individuals with disabilities can move from company to company like anyone else and as easily as anyone else and that the statistics will show this. The last point I want to mention, we are coming up with accommodations focused reviews soon. So not only are we doing the section 503 focused reviews, we are going to be doing focused reviews on accommodations. When you go on our website, look at the centralized accommodations system closely. Because we're going to be looking for those. They may not be required by law but they are definitely a best practice and it is very possible you will be discriminating against people with disabilities if you don't have one. We're going to be looking at accommodations in the same way we are doing our section 503 focused reviews. There's going to be disability accommodations and religious accommodations but for purposes of this talk today, I'm going to focus on disability accommodations. We're going to be looking at every accommodation that you have denied and we're going to be looking to make sure that you're doing the appropriate things in those reviews. And let me tell you my general view. The best companies in this area, the ones that have the highest utilization rates in the disability inclusion programs, they generally grant every accommodation. And they amortize the cost across the company and have a centralized accommodation process and they generally grant them as a matter of course. You should be working to that goal because anytime you can grant an accommodation, it increases productivity. It's required by law in almost all cases, it is a good thing to do generally. And the way you attract employees who have disabilities or have them self-identify is by having a welcoming environment where they know they can get an accommodation if they need one and they know that they can have an affinity group or some sort of employee resource group for people with disabilities and even beyond that, for parents with disabilities. For people with different types of disabilities or kinds of disabilities, if you have a large population in your company. Having a lot of different policies for people with disabilities is what will attract people with disabilities to your company and we know also based on studies, that means your company will do better because inclusive companies for people with disabilities have greater growth and greater productivity. These are statistics, this is not just me saying this. So anyhow, that's what we are working on. We're very proud to be doing this 30th anniversary of the ADA. Thank you, everybody. I know I'm just a panelist, but Phil did say I could speak for a little bit extra to get this out and I wanted everyone to hear all these things.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Well, we really appreciate it Craig, and how your passion is very clear and evident and I think you're making a major difference because of that. I want to go to Mark next and really talk about that question of labor force participation rates and how metrics drive success. Obviously, OFCCP has the 7 percent goal on federal contracts but Mark, I'm really curious: How does the vocational rehabilitation system use metrics to track the work you're doing, how do you measure skill attainment for your clients with disabilities, placement rates, and how do you leverage the metrics you have to follow to really drive people into the workforce?

Mark Shultz: Absolutely. I think as you know, we've established some performance measures that we utilize to evaluate that but also, one of the things that I just want to start with is traditionally, we have been based -- I think focused on helping individuals with disabilities get a job. Any job. And I really think that we need to be moving towards looking at more quality employment and by that, I mean employment which is meaningful to the individual and gets them on a career pathway that will then enable them to achieve economic self-sufficiency -- to have benefits, higher wages and so forth. Using some of the metrics to drive that, we're looking at the performance measures around wages and second and fourth quarter after exiting the program. Those metrics drive some of that but I think we are going to have to continue to look at what other metrics might drive those changes as we move forward. I think as we look at some of the metrics around the gaps that exist, trying to move us away from looking at just what a successful outcome in those numbers are but looking again at that those quality kinds of measures that show we've helped someone achieve meaningful employment. That starts I think with increasing expectations from the very beginning, both for the individual, that VR is going to be there and being able to provide that support, to provide the services that enable them to have those opportunities to be successful in the career path that they choose. So that's a mindset that's going to take some time to put in place, and I think WIOA moves us in that direction and establishes those metrics to do that. I would give you an example, and some of the things that we're looking at is creating the expectation around the limitations on these sub minimum wages, for example. WIOA establishes that and moves us away to competitive integrated employment, so competitive meaning that we're paying them at least a minimum wage or a wage that would be expected to be paid to any individual in that same position, whether they have a disability or not. So, section 511 of the rehab act drives this towards reducing the number of section 14c certificates which are those that are authorized to pay a sub minimum wage under the fair labor standards act. So in looking at that and trying to track the metrics around that, we had some research that was conducted by our technical assistance center, the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), looking at wage an hour data from last year to this year, from around July 19 to January 2020. We saw an overall decrease of 145 certificate holders. And a decrease of 8,681 sub minimum wage workers. I think looking at those metrics, we are starting to see that there is an impact and we can look at other evidence I think that starts to show that we are moving in the right direction. We know at least four states have eliminated the option to pay individuals with disabilities a sub minimum wage and we have several others that have passed legislation to start to phase out sub minimum wages, so I think it is important we continue to look at those metrics, so that we know that we are having the success that we intend with the policies that we put into place.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful, thank you Mark. And I wanted to ask Shane, obviously, the title of this panel is around the future of work and not just where we are. I'm really curious, what do you see as we look to what does the future of work look like and what do you think are the kinds of metrics that companies, nonprofits, federal agencies need to look too? I think we saw a little bit of it with both Craig and Mark talking about wage gap and improving skills but also quality of work measures, so what do future metrics look like Shane?

Shane Kanady: Sure, so I think that's certainly an important question because what gets measured, gets done as goes the saying. But I think the philosophical underpinning of some of those things, that there is a presumption that people are assigning the same level of value to others. And so the general notion that the social identity of persons with disabilities, that companies or that policymakers and those other groups are seeing that persons with disabilities have just as much to contribute to the workforce or in the fields of education or as economic contributors, not just beneficiaries as anybody else, that's important. And to get to that point is where you would actually create some momentum and some movement. So, Mr. Schultz referenced an example of a movement in one direction in terms of the 14c utilization, and seeing a decrease year-over-year in that, as a symbol of progress. and it's important that people understand what that means in context, and what that relates to in terms of an overall mindset shift in the inclusions of persons with disabilities. And how that relates to the future of economic opportunity but when we see events like recessions occur where persons with disabilities, over the last four recessions during a point of economic recovery, their employment rates have decreased by 9 percent relative to persons without disabilities whose employment levels have increased by 2 percent during those events. What happens when these economic disruptions occur in the midst of these shifts from one policy lever to hopefully more inclusive employment, but then we run up against a recession and understanding the impact that people experienced during that. I'm not sure if there is enough data around that. I don't think we necessarily think through that when it comes to these sort of unprecedented events. And so, understanding even what happened during the last recession and individuals that might have shifted off 14c when the recession hit and then there was a period of recovery, what was thier experience? What happened with their employment situation and did we see a change in the use of something like 14c as people try to re-enter the labor force. Is that a mechanism that someone might utilize? I don't know. But putting those all in context, right - this all has to do with the overall kind of assignment of value of persons with disabilities in a social situation. So before we can really talk about metrics like what does success look like, we have to have people understanding that there is the same amount of value that anyone can create as a contributor as their non-disabled peers.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you so much Shane. I think that really captures it, not only are we all in this because we care about nothing about us without us, we all have our connections to disability, both personal and familial, but it is fundamentally about driving home that equal value and the equal opportunity. And I think that we are really starting to push that and we have obviously some economic headwinds, but we have opportunities even in those difficult times. I was going to say, we are going to -- we are waiting on a special guest to interrupt us at the moment. Congressman Brad Sherman from California should be joining us momentarily. We had invited him to give a keynote and we were trying to be flexible with the schedule due to floor votes in congress. But in the meantime, while we are waiting for the congressman to join us, I do want to quickly ask everyone here, very quickly from Mark, Craig, and Shane, what advice would you give to a current job seeker with a disability? What specifically would you tell them to - what should they do now or what should they go out and learn or study or where should they get started on their job search? Let's go with Mark first.

Mark Schultz: Sure, well I would tell them first if they're a student, I would say they need to participate in FBLA, FFA, Educators Rising, any of those career and technical student organizations. It's a great place, great opportunity to start to learn those entrepreneurial skills and to have some experience by participating in activities, events, and competitions. I would also say individuals should take advantage of any work-based learning opportunities, apprenticeships, they should seek credentials particularly in high demand fields. And really, understand the labor market trends and needs in their area. I think unless they are willing to look to move or explore new career opportunities, that's going to be a foundational aspect of trying to decide what your career pathway is going to be. And to look at STEM careers. I think there is a high demand there and a high need. But also to be prepared to discuss your disability, and how perceived barriers can be overcome so that you're addressing those employers' misconceptions or misperceptions, I think upfront would be important. And also, I think to seek out peer mentors, role models in your chosen field that can help support you as you pursue that career path. I think that is really important to success. I know for me it was. I had a mentor as I started out in a profession that was valuable to me in giving me information that I could not pick up any other way. Last thing I would say, don't be afraid to start with a VR office near you. That's why they exist, to provide assistance with career planning and the services and supports that can help you as you pursue that career.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Craig? Again, that question. What advice would you give to a job seeker with a disability at this moment to bump up their skills and prepare to find that new job even with everything that's going on right now?

Craig Leen: Much of the advice would be the same as someone without a disability. In terms of the part that I think-- if I was going to give them specific advice it would be, one, look at federal contractors. Federal contractors already have the 503 obligation, and affirmative action obligation and the utilization goal. So look at them, and they should have the best accommodation programs that exist. Two, I'd tell them to go to the OFCCP website and look at the different companies' disability inclusion programs that we already have up there. If they have autism, I would say look at the autism at work programs that are listed up there. I would tell them to go to RespectAbility's website, to DisablityIn, a number of the different disability organizations in the United States and look at the different programs that are available. And then I would tell them to call OFCCP, because they are part of a protected class that we care deeply about and we will work with them and tried to put them in contact with all of those resources so we can help them as well. That's what I would tell them.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Shane, we will wait for your question until after we have Congressman Brad Sherman. Congressman, thank you so much for joining us and I'm so happy to have you with us. You're the proud representative of a good chunk of Los Angeles county, including Sherman Oaks which is a lovely place where we have had several events with you, all talking about disability employment issues. I know you just came from the house floor, and so we are going to briefly take a break from our panelists and give you - the Honorable gentleman from California has the floor.

Congressman Sherman: Thank you, and thank you so much, Phil. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Congressman Brad Sherman from California's best-named city, Sherman Oaks. And I represent most of the San Fernando valley of the United States. I'm delighted to be with you today to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I want to talk about economic success and independence for people with disabilities. These are challenging times for everyone in our society. We face a pandemic, overdue demands for racial justice and of course, we just saw the economic numbers today with a huge decline in our GDP. These past months have forced many to improvise, to adapt, to change our ways. These are things that people with disabilities have had to do forever. In addition, for years disability advocates have been calling on employers to embrace the idea of working from home. Now, because of COVID, more and more businesses have joined the telework revolution. I am here to talk to you about the impact of ADA. And the community Reinvestment Act, which I believe can help people with disabilities and is in the area that I focus on as a member of the Financial Services committee for the last 24 years. Today, RespectAbility and other groups are gathering advocates, public officials, and experts to talk about the thirty-year legacy of the ADA. The ADA was an unprecedented step forward to declare an end to discrimination and provide full citizenship for all people with disabilities. Yet, the ADA is only one of the tools available in our toolbox for making our nation a more just country for those with disabilities. The Community Reinvestment Act, also known as the CRA, is another such tool in the toolbox. It was signed back in 1977 and is a primary part of bank regulation in our country. It was designed to encourage banks to meet the needs of borrowers who have been targets of discrimination in areas that have been subject to redlining. The law has existed of course for 43 years to help low and moderate-income neighborhoods through retail banking and community development. As one of the senior members of the House committee on financial services, I worked to ensure that laws like CRA help the traditionally discriminated against groups who are of course people of color, but also people with disabilities. At this point, you may be wondering what the CRA has to do with people with disabilities. According to the National Disability Institute, 60 percent of adults with disabilities have low or moderate income and that means they tend to live in neighborhoods that count as low or moderate-income communities under CRA. Historically, the CRA has not included people with disabilities as a discrete category of people who need financial support in a firm or banking system. However, recently, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency – the OCC, one of the federal agencies that enforces the CRA has put forward proposed revisions to its regulations. Under these proposals, banks subject to OCC oversight, which is a huge chunk of the commercial banks in our country, will now be recognized and be given CRA points toward compliance for lending activity that benefits people with disabilities. Now, there are other parts of this proposed regulation that I may have concerns with, but I commend the work of the OCC to recognize the financial needs of people with disabilities and the businesses that serve them. These changes move the ball forward on including people with disabilities under CRA and our other civil rights statutes, and opens the chance for greater inclusion in the future. Under the new rules, banks that are now specifically encouraged to lend to businesses that meet certain needs will be encouraged to lend to businesses to improve accessibility to their facilities, to lend to public libraries that accommodate patrons with disabilities, and to lend for the construction and rehabilitation of rental housing to accommodate people with disabilities. These and other changes to CRA mark an important milestone. Consider that CRA has been the law of the land for of course many decades, since 1977 and this is the first time it has focused on the needs of people with disabilities. And it is about time that we recognize that 56 million or more Americans with disabilities that need access to credit services and community investment dollars. It is going to take further updates and improvements to this policy in order to achieve our objectives. We also see in the new CRA rules, provisions encouraging banks to train their staffs to recognize and work effectively with people that have executive function issues and other disabilities. If you're going to support efforts to reintegrate citizens and to get them back into the workforce and back into our economic system, then you need to recognize that they may have distinct needs. This includes learning and mental behavior health disabilities. Now I want to pivot and talk about what might happen if more people with disabilities could get the financial capital they need. How many more people with disabilities could invest in making their homes accessible? How many entrepreneurs with disabilities might move to use new technologies and to invent products that will help other people with disabilities? Just imagine the possibilities if banks and businesses better met the needs of people with disabilities and particularly those living in low or moderate income communities. I believe we have made important progress toward this goal. I look forward to continuing to work to ensure that people with disabilities are not overlooked and their needs for banking, investment, and other financial services are met. At the start of my remarks, I mentioned entrepreneurship among people with disabilities. For some with disabilities, due to discrimination or just due to personal preference, they find that starting their own business is the best way to earn enough money to live independently. It's of course tougher in this pandemic and this recession, but success can happen. A key tool for success for people with disabilities can be entrepreneurship. Before this pandemic started, we don't have up-to-the-minute statistics on this for our current situation but I hope that 2021 has a lot in common with 2019 and not in common with our current situation. Before this pandemic started, one in ten workers with disabilities were their own bosses. That's right, 10 percent of all Americans with disabilities that had jobs, their job was entrepreneur. The flexibility that comes with being a small business owner can be a great choice for people with disabilities who want to earn an income. I'm an old CPA, so I focus on success in my own profession. One of the big four audit firms that you may have heard of is Ernst & Young. It's founder, Arthur Young, was Deaf and had low vision. No one would hire him so he went out and launched his own CPA firm. Today, Ernst & Young is a global enterprise with more than 150 different countries with almost a quarter million employees. Best of all, they are a leading employer of workers with disabilities. Likewise, the CEO of Fubu and the Shark Tank star Daymond John struggled in elementary school and was not given appropriate support for learning disabilities, yet he has gone on to build his own fortune. Richard Branson is another entrepreneur with disabilities who has reshaped the global face of business. Businesspeople with disabilities, from Stephen Hawking, who unlocked the secrets of the universe from a wheelchair, to Thomas Edison who was Deaf – people with disabilities can be great innovators, problem solvers, and entrepreneurs. One of my own constituents, Sean McElwee, manages a t-shirt business called Seanese. Sean, who has Down syndrome, starred in the A&E television show you may have watched, Born This Way. I've met with Sean and he's even testified to congress about how running your own business can be a path to success for people with disabilities. I mentioned these names because I believe that if people with disabilities have a chance to showcase their talents and invest in their home communities, they can help us transform this nation. Even with all the darkness in 2020, there is cause for hope. 30 years ago when the ADA became law, the high school graduation rate for students with disabilities was only 45 percent -- 45.7 percent. For the year 2018, high school graduation rate for those with disabilities was 67 percent. Now, that's not where we need to end up, but that shows significant progress. In 1990, the employment rate for people with disabilities was only 28.7 percent. By 2018, that had jumped -- had risen by ten percentage points. We've of course lost ground in this crisis. Every community has lost ground in this crisis. But the success we had in the first 29, 29 and a half years after the passage of ADA shows what we can achieve and hopefully at a much quicker rate as this country reopens. I am grateful – and we should of course not reopen until we can do so safely, but that is another issue. I am grateful to RespectAbility's chairman, Steve Bartlett, the honorable Steve Bartlett, former member who helped lead -- who was a lead co-author of the ADA when he was in Congress and I want to thank Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi who has been my friend for over two decades and founded RespectAbility. I am deeply grateful to everyone who is watching this now, for their commitment to a better future for people with disabilities. Together we can fight stigmas, advance opportunities, and provide for capital and entrepreneurship. I'm Brad Sherman, from America's best-named city, Sherman Oaks. Thank you very much.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Thank you so much Congressman.

Hon. Steve Bartlett: Mr. Chairman, this is Steve Bartlett. I watched intently and listened, thank you very much. I'm on with you. I want to say to our listeners, and we have several thousand on this call, that Brad Sherman is a real stalwart on disability rights and financial services in the Congress, and we thank you for your leadership. He is not just a congressman, although there is no such thing. He is the chair of the House financial services subcommittee on investor protection, entrepreneurship and capital markets, note the themes that he also is involved with disability work. So Brad, thank you very much for your leadership. Brad Sherman: Thank you.

Hon. Steve Bartlett: I think we now go on. Philip do you have some closing --

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Closing questions for our panelists, definitely. Craig, Mark, Shane, thank you very much for coming back, and you gotta move when Congress moves, right? I was going to say, we have some great questions in the chat box that I kind of want to wrap into the prepared questions I had. Somebody asked about Oregon and sub-minimum wage. Mark thank you for bringing that up and talking about how the movement is shifting and there is really that stronger emphasis on competitive integrated employment. We had somebody asking a question about disability disclosure in the workplace. That is a very difficult thing to do particularly if it's a mental health condition, and the stigmas associated with saying I'm bipolar or I have depression. But it is a conversation that more employers are having especially because more people are developing mental health conditions because of this pandemic. We had cut off Shane, any other last pieces of advice, Shane, you have for any current job seekers in terms of getting into the workforce even nowadays?

Shane Kanady: I really appreciated Congressman Sherman's comments and I actually wanted to reframe my response around some of what he was talking about in terms of entrepreneurship. Certainly, we don't want to take for granted that entrepreneurship is easy at all, and the number of small businesses that unfortunately don't make it within the first couple of years of opening certainly needs to be taken into consideration. But certainly, when we look at opportunities, an individual with a lived experience that is running their own organization - If they're applying that lived experience to the products and services that they are offering which is potentially a differentiator. So if you look at the business case for including persons with disabilities, that extends far beyond companies that just hire inclusively. The market potential for accessible products and services, if a person with a disability is themselves leading that and helping to address barriers for others with a shared experience and also taking advantage of that market opportunity, that's a pretty exciting proposition.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Absolutely, thank you Shane. I've gotten a question about nuerodiversity in the chat box. So I'm going to go Mark, Craig and then Shane again if you'd like. We have a question about nuerodiversity is a very important topic in employment these days. One of our guests mentioned how they work with women on the autism spectrum to develop job skills but also the importance of offering customized employment. So I'm curious, Craig, Mark and Shane, how do you see success or best practices around neurodiversity in the workplace?

Craig Leen: Yes. That's something that is very close to my heart and something I care deeply about. I think every federal contractor should have an autism at work program or a neurodiversity at work program. We initially saw them starting in the tech field, the tech sector with some very prominent ones. I actually visited a couple. One at Microsoft, one at SAP. I visited a program at CVS Health. We've seen that they are expanding into other industries, and it is something that should be in every industry. I support them in the tech field, of course but, you know, sometimes you talk about stereotypes and stigmas. There is an idea out there that people with autism sometimes are savants or something like that in the tech field. That is true sometimes, but still, every person with autism is different and not all of them are experts in tech. But they deserve a job and they deserve an opportunity and the way that they look at the world in neurodiversity like my daughter, let me show you a photo of my daughter, actually, I keep on my desk. This expresses to me neurodiversity. My daughter looks at the world differently than me, we go on hikes, we love going outdoors. She just sees things differently than I do. She has profound autism, she is neurodiverse and she adds value wherever we are because she sees the world a little differently. A different perspective. And that's what neurodiversity is. It could be someone with profound autism but it could be moderate or mild, it could be someone that has another intellectual or cognitive disability. It could be neurodiversity generally. But all of that adds to the workforce because that's what you want. That is what diversity is, when you have people who look at things differently, that can solve a problem in a different way. One thing we did see at SAP and Microsoft was they did tell us a lot of the employees with autism there did do that, and added tremendous value and brought in solutions that were incredible. Well this can be done in every field. Not everyone with autism is going to want to go into tech, not everyone with autism is going to be a genius. We need to also realize there are certain stereotypes out there, and that they may be very good at other things and that it is not just certain jobs that are for people with autism - I guess that's the point I wanted to make - or for people who are nuerodiverse. Every company should look at neurodiversity and offer opportunities to people with autism. One other thing I wanted to say, and I don't want to belabor it but it's something I talk a lot about and care a lot about, look at the way you do your hiring systems. A lot of these autism at work programs focus on the hiring process and they change it a little bit because some of the things – even though everyone with autism is different, some characteristics that are similar are that often someone with autism may not have eye contact, or it might be a challenge for them, or they may have some social awkwardness. It's difficult for them to speak in that sort of format, but if they are in the workplace, they'll do really well. And so having the interview process be adjusted or opened or accommodated, essentially providing an accommodation through the hiring process to allow [unintelligble], that can let them shine. And then you may be able to employ them, and I want to be clear – that's not special treatment, that's equal treatment. That's what we are talking about. These accommodations give that person the opportunity to show who they are and just because they're different, they're neurodiverse, they are not immediately rejected as, "oh, you're something other, you're different." That's what we reject and that is what discrimination is ultimately. And we want to move away from that. Things like – and we talk a lot about, systemic racism, and systemic sexism, and we do that. At OFCCP we are focused on eliminating that. Discrimination against people with disabilities is the same thing. It is just as bad, and it needs to be eliminated and the way do that is by eliminating stereotypes and giving people opportunities for people to be able to apply.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Perfect. Thank you so much Craig. Now I'm curious, Mark, from your perspective, how does the vocation rehabilitation system address matters of neurodiversity? Because you have to serve all people with different kinds of disabilities: mobility, physical, cognitive, IDD, so I'm curious - how does – how do you have that conversation in the context of VR and specifically around business outreach work that you do through your agencies?

Mark Schultz: I think that outreach occurs for all individuals with disabilities, and you look at those best matches for individuals based on their skills and abilities. And I think Craig hit on one of the key things, is just getting into the door. Those hiring practices are critical in terms of allowing individuals with disabilities, particularly neuro diversity, to be able to have that opportunity. And if you don't interview well, you don't get past that, how do you account for that? And so looking at those strategies-- for example, you mentioned some of the technology businesses, so Microsoft has a program where the strategy that they employed was rather than have that 45 minute interview with someone, they bring them in for a week and try them out on different skills to be able to test them out and to really evaluate their fit for the job. Through that process, 110 individuals now have jobs with Microsoft that otherwise wouldn't. Another strategy that I really like is progressive employment where individuals get into the workplace, and it could be job shadowing, it could be just some career exploration, but it allows the employer to actually interact with the individual and to assess their skills, their interest in the position, and really make a better match for the individual. So I think we have to look at those kind of strategies that it creates for flexibility and allow for a truer assessment of the individual and the fit into those positions.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: I was going to say, I think we have a much deeper conversation to be had in the future about that transition of how do you go from job shadowing to internship to skill building and ultimately into a career pathway. So thank you for bringing that forward, Mark. And I was going to say, Shane, how do you-- where do you see neuro diversity in the future and what issues do you see in your own work?

Shane Kanady: Sure, so kind of a take off both Craig's and Mark's comments. So modern hiring practices, inherently, are discriminatory in nature because everyone is trying to screen in the ideal candidate that they have in their minds and immediately trying to screen out anything that is different from that. And so when we approach it that way and we realize that, even taking a look at the technology that we use today to expedite the hiring process, the platforms that we use for matching people between jobs and opportunities, well the algorithms that we're building to do that, if they are inherently discriminatory based on the biases that are inherent to the person that created them-- not purposefully, it's just, they don't maybe know otherwise or don't recognize that they're programming that into it, are we creating more efficient ways to exclude people from the labor force? And people aren't even getting their foot in the door from that standpoint. I think as we talk about neurodiversity, as we talk about the expansion of that conversation, persons with disabilities generally, also the topic of intersectionality. There are so many different ways that people experience barriers to the labor force, barriers to education, barriers to access to benefits and justice and these sorts of things, that we need to recognize that people are unique. People have unique circumstances and experiences, and as disability intersects with other ways that people identify, if we are not paying attention to that, then we're overlooking the cultural context by which people come to these conversations. And there is a crossover between disability and race and gender and age and all of these things. It is important that we keep that in mind when we have any of these conversations about systemic reform and hiring practices as we incentivize the private sector to take action, as we change technology, those sorts of things.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful, thank you Shane. I'm really glad you touched on that intersectionality piece because that's kind of the last thing I would like us as a panel, I should say a manel because we lost some of our diversity due to extraneous factors, I do want us to pause and reflect on each of us in our own ways, as a policy wonk, as a agency leader, as a advocate, what can we do to really drive diversity and inclusion in both our field but also in the work that we do? So I'll go Mark, Craig, and Shane.

Mark Schultz: Thank you, Philip. So as we look at our state plans, we just went through that review process and as a part of that, they do a comprehensive statewide needs assessment. We're actually seeing that there is more diversity in the individuals that are coming into the VR programs. They are serving more individuals, I think, from minority backgrounds, and particularly as compared to the state population. So we are seeing some progress there. But I think also, just recognizing that we need to do more in terms of bringing in that diversity to our profession. And so as a program, VR is able to provide some grants to some of our minority institutions. So we currently have seven historically Black colleges and universities and six Hispanic serving institutions that are supporting the training of future VR counselors. So we hope to be able to bring that diversity into the field by increasing the number of counselors with minority backgrounds. And then in addition to that, we're supporting one tribal college to provide training to VR counselors that are working in the tribal programs. [Unintelligible] I know that the association for VR programs is working on the development of an equity statement. And so I'm really excited to see that activity, but also to start seeing the action around that and how we intend to implement that. So our programs are aware and we are taking steps to address those issues.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Wonderful, thank you so much, and I really appreciate the work you're doing around HBCUs and Hispanic serving institutions. Thank you for sharing that Mark. Craig, diversity and intersectionality. What does it mean for OFCCP and where can we bring it into our work?

Craig Leen: OFCCP is very focused on intersectionality. We're doing it in the race and gender context, looking at the intersection of race and gender and now we're seeking to try to bring in disability status as well to look at intersectional issues there. There's also often socioeconomic intersectional issues as well. Let me give you an example from my perspective. I mentioned before that my daughter has profound autism. I have fought for accommodations for her in her IEP, for a decade. And I am a lawyer, and the head of a federal agency. Obviously – I don't bring that up obviously, but I know what I'm talking about in these areas. My wife is a psychiatrist, board certified, in child psychiatry and adult psychiatry, and we have a hard time getting accommodations even though we're basically experts in the field. And it makes me think that -- and also I am very outspoken, as you can see, I fight for it. I fight for my daughter, and a lot of people will fight for their kids or fight for their colleagues, or for themselves, but it is often hard because you don't know what to ask for, you don't know what to say, you don't know what the company is able to do. And that sort of ad hoc decentralized process is not a great thing. So the best thing that federal contractors can do, for example, or your company, is from the top down, you need to make it clear that you are a neurodiverse employer. It should be on your website. You should say, we are a neuro diverse employer. We are committed to full inclusion of people with disabilities in employment. We welcome accommodations. We don't look at it as a legal issue, it is a legal issue, but we welcome. We look at it as a productivity issue. We want to grant you an accommodation and we want you to ask us. You have a message from your CEO and you do it quarterly to all your staff, welcoming people to request accommodations and welcoming people with disabilities, and talking about disabilities in a positive way. Not looking at it as a legal issue, where, oh, that's legal where any time someone makes a request for accommodation, put them through a very comprehensive legal process which basically just causes people not to want to make an accommodation request. And then you grant them as a matter of course, so that it doesn't depend on the person requesting it being a lawyer or being a doctor or having certain experience and know how to ask something or continuing until you finally grant it. It is that sort of systemic approach from the employer, from the government, from the employer, from institutions that go to the employee and go to the person or the applicant. That's how you address intersectionality. That's how you address full inclusion of people with disabilities. And then, let me tell you, you will get people to apply. People with disabilities would love to apply. Like you mentioned, many are looking for jobs. They'll apply to your employer, they'll say immediately they have a disability. You won't have an issue with self-identification. They'll want to self identify because they know it's gonna help them in employment, because you're gonna accommodate them and they know that you also have a 7 percent utilization goal and they're going to want to help you meet it. So that is my general thinking on that.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Absolutely Craig, and that is the important thing, it can't just be a one-off autism program or and IDD program. It needs to be about bringing systemic change across the entire spectrum of disabilities and across the spectrum of different matters of intersectionality. So Shane, do you have any final last comments on diversity and intersectionality? And you got to keep it real quick.

Shane Kanady: I do, yeah. So I'm very excited about the forthcoming publication of a project we have been working on on this topic which really does a geographic overlay of available demographic information around persons with disabilities in the US. And the trends that might be impacting employment such as technological unemployment due to automation, or the impact of the pandemic. Though the index is not intended to be scientifically deterministic, it provides a different level of insight about how people may experience such events and how their intersectional identities around age, disability type, economic situation, education level, gender, geography, those sorts of things all have a bearing on the outcomes and potential interventions. If we take a step back and actually look at how those trends are converging and how they're impacting human beings, it will improve the policy making process and the design of interventions from community groups and our ability to even start this conversation in a very real way to engage the community in a way that makes sense, to respect the cultural context of individuals and empower them to lead within their own communities by first understanding how they might be identifying in the first place.

Philip Kahn-Pauli: Perfect. Alright, and I wish we had more time, but we all have very busy things to do. Mark has an ADA DOT event to get to, we all gotta go change the world in our own ways, so thank you to my esteemed panelists for joining us. And thank you for what you've brought forward, and what you've shared with us. We have an exciting panel coming up with our private sector partners. It's gonna dig in more deeply around many of these issues around accommodations, intersectionality, and leadership and equality. We also have some art to showcase with you. So panelists, you are officially dismissed. Thank you. And we will catch you on the flip side.

Hon. Steve Bartlett: Fabulous panel, absolutely awesome and a wealth of information. Thank you very much. Also, thanks to our keynoter, Congressman Brad Sherman, he's a real champion of disability rights in the Congress. We're now going to enjoy some fine art, thanks to our collaboration with the Phillips collection. Today we are celebrating the distinguished pieces by great artists with disabilities. You'll be on that experience while you watch and take a little bit of a break. But at 2:15 promptly, we're gonna be right start back with our next panel and you won't want to miss it. It's called the private sector and the future of work for people with disabilities. Stay on, and stay tuned and we will see you back at 2:15.

[Art Gallery Video]

Steve Bartlett: Thank you to Phillips, that is just awesome. Welcome back. Our next panel will address the private sector, and the future of work for people with disabilities. You will be astounded by this panel and what they have to say. Again, there are 22 million working-age people with disabilities in America, and fewer than one in three has a job. Learn from the top experts who are enabling employers. I’m going to open this topic with a keynote from Mark Feinour, executive director of the Support Services Group, Bank of America. We have the pleasure with working at RespectAbility with Bank of America a company that employs literally thousands of people with disabilities. So Mark, you’re on.

[Mark Feinour Video]

Steve Bartlett: Thank you Mark, for that timely message and for everything that you and Bank Of America are doing, for both today with your participation, but also your outstanding work as employers of people with disabilities. You've truly made a difference, and of course, we thank you for your partnership with RespectAbility. It's great to have you on our team. Now let's welcome three of RespectAbility's board members who are experts on disability employment. I will turn it over to our moderator, Randy Duchesneau. He is our newly elected as of Tuesday Secretary of RespectAbility's board, so Randy you need to get those minutes in right away. As a longtime disability advocate, he's going to introduce our two panelists who are some of the nation's leading innovators on disability inclusion in the workplace. Randy, the Zoom floor is yours.

Randall Duchesneau: Thank you very much Steve, It's great to be here today to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ADA. I'm joined today by Vincenzo Piscopo and Jim Sinocchi. Vincenzo works as Community and Stakeholder Relations Director for the Coca-Cola Company, where he manages the relationships with disability, veterans, and hispanic organizations, as well as United Way, and Hands On Atlanta. He has worked for the Coca-Cola Company for the last 22 years in different areas of the organization, finance, IT, marketing and innovation. He has a Bachelor Degree in economics, an MBA from Carnegie Mellon, and a master in creativity from Buffalo State College. He is the president and founding member of this-ABILITY business resource group for the Coca-Cola Company, and the President and Founder of the Wheels of Happiness foundation, where he uses his expertise to help people with motor disabilities in disadvantaged areas of the world. He was born and grew up in Venezuela, plays wheelchair tennis, and is married with four kids. Our other panelist today is Jim Sinocchi. Jim, works closely with senior leaders across JPMorgan Chase, to establish consistent standards and processes to better support employees with disabilities. The office also supports employees who care for disabled family members. Jim Sinocchi is keenly aware of these issues and challenges facing people with disabilities, as he sustained a spinal cord injury early in his business career. He has been active in creating awareness and understanding of disability inclusion through his blog: View from the Chair. He has served on the boards of Jawonio, an organization focused on the well-being and equality of people with disabilities, and the Human Rights Commission in Rockland County, New York. He is also a member of the Viscardi Center Board of Directors, a special education school in New York for severely disabled students. Thank you Jim and Vincenzo, for joining us today. This panel celebrates the 30th anniversary of the ADA, and it looks at The Future of Work for People with Disabilities. As such, what are some positive examples of employers and practices that are really successful moving towards a bright better future for workers with disabilities?

Vincenzo Piscopo: So who would you want...should we...

Randall Duchesneau: I'll--I'll just... I'll direct this question first to Vincenzo.

Vincenzo Piscopo: Great. Thank you so much, Randy, for – first of all, thank you so much RespectAbility for inviting me to this panel for one more time, and also, you know, it's an honor for me to be a board member of RespectAbility, an organization that actually makes me super proud - extremely proud, especially when I see the impact that it's having on the community of people with disabilities. So I think that there are several good examples of how employers and practices are really successfully moving towards a bright better future for workers with disabilities, and one that was mentioned in the previous panels is our presence, you know, the presence of people with disabilities in advertising and in movies and in TV and all that. By having those people with disabilities in front and behind the camera, basically is having a triple effect. The first effect is that it's empowering the people with disabilities because they see them in camera and they see, you know, all the potential and all that. Second, it actually creates a brilliant cycle, for lack of a better word, because the more that we have people with disabilities on TV, the more that organizations feel and get the pressure to actually have representation in advertising, and in shows, and so on, so forth. And the more that we have those people, our representation on TV, the more the need is to really understand the people with disabilities' reality, the more that it becomes important for us as organizations to hire people with disabilities, so that we can be well represented. You know, it's something that we always say is "nothing about us, without us," and by having people with disabilities, represented in ads allows us to be able to create that pressure, to be more present, and to hire more people that know about having that presence. The other thing that is happening and this is more general is the fact that social responsibility is becoming extremely important for organizations and in organizations. So consumers are no longer longer okay with organizations that are not taking a stand for social issues. And employees are not very patient with that, you know. I can tell you as an employee of the Coca-Cola Company, You know with the recent social unrest Coca-Cola was very fast, not only at creating a stand, but also to making a difference making an impact, but a little bit, because that's part of our purpose, but also because our employees pressured and requested that to happen. So social responsibility becomes so important for organizations, that it's making organizations, like Coca-Cola, and many others like they're being very attentive on things related to diversity to inclusion because they know that the eyes of employees, and the eyes of consumers are on them for those kind of things. And finally, another thing that I feel that is happening, that is extremely important is that paradigm shift or change between charity to opportunity - the whole thing that people with disabilities really don't need your charity, people with disability need opportunities, and once you give them opportunities, they can add value to you, to society, to organizations and all that. And that shift in paradigm is creating a lot of noise in organizations, that is making them realize that having people with disabilities in the workforce is not just a nice thing to do, but actually a very smart thing to do.

Randall Duchesneau: Jim do you ever have anything to add?

Jim Sinocchi: No, I think that Vinz is right on the spot. I think from my point as an employer, which I've espoused for four years at JPMorgan Chase and 39 years at IBM, while I was a marketing communications executive and disability inclusion wasn't my primary role. I think there's several venues that we have to look for when it comes to this population of disabled employees. I think number one is full employment - as full as we can make it. Number two is repairing or enhancing our transportation infrastructure. And number three is letting people work – and this is not in play but I've had discussions about it – I'd like people to go to work while they're getting government benefits, which in some states are allowed, to enable people to work and not just get government money. Go out and get public money that you've earned, but you don't lose your benefits. And the reason I'm thinking this way is because, people with disabilities can come to the table in small and medium businesses, where most of our people are employed but have the benefit of medical care and aids, etcetera, to get them to work. And right now, we're at an impasse because, if you go to work, you lose your benefits. So what you do is stay at home and don't work. So the idea is that we've got to move the bar, so that it's just not a welfare quote-unquote state, but an employment state. And I think people should be employed in anyway they can. Matter of fact, in a simple study that I had done out in California, one of the things we found that if people of the ages of say 24 to 35 go back to work with disabilities, they could return almost 300 billion dollars back to the economy, while working. Right now, the government gets zero. So I think there is still room for inventiveness in this space, other than the traditional things we keep talking about which moves very slowly, if at all.

Randall Duchesneau: Thank you very much Jim. Our next question, which I'll direct to you first, Jim. COVID-19 has impacted how Americans live, how employees work, and how companies think about the future. By necessity, remote work has become an accepted part of professional life for thousands of workers. What can we do to make telework successful for their employees with disabilities? How does it impact the accommodations process? Jim, would you like to respond first?

Jim Sinocchi: Sure. I don't think it's accepted yet, but the experiment that we've had at least at Chase showed that most of our employees were working at home. We still had people come to work. Our traders, for example, had to come to work because of the systems they run on, but a lot of our employees, the majority of so worked at home around the world, and the firm found that it was very productive. On the other side of that, the investment in our technology went up, so that we can account for the power the MIPS as they call them to run our servers around the world for people working individually at home. So that was a challenge, but the firm stepped up to that. I think our firm also found that people were ethical workers at home. There was always some doubt that when you're working at home, you can't be watched by your manager or your colleagues, and, you know, Are you ethical? And one of the good things about working in the bank is ethics are so important, because we're dealing with clients and their funds, etcetera. So I think all businesses have found the utility there. Now whether they're going to keep it up or not - your guess is as good as mine. I know at IBM, because I work for a technology company and, it's interesting that I work for a fintech company now, so they're as savvy as IBM was in my day. But at IBM, we were allowed to work from home, because we had the technology to do it. And it was just an extension of our work. So I think that – I think our managers at Chase, because I've talked to them, found that work from home was good, and that some of the enlightened managers at the firm quickly found out that people with disabilities can work from home quite well. And, you know, everybody was on their greatest work ethic at the bank, and I'm sure there were exceptions, but for the most part, I think it worked out very well. I've been home since March after coming back from a trip in Washington, and I've been working from home quite effectively on meeting all the people, knowing the people. And technology I always call the great equalizer for people with disabilities, and it really showed the equalization in doing work every day. And it's a wonderful thing to not only email people, but see people as we're doing now as we work. We're all working still, and so I think it's very possible. I don't know what the tolerance is going to be for long- term work at home, because if you remember, when you're in an institution, an organization of any sort, the networking is important - in person, personal meetings, meeting clients. So there are options to all that. I think that if we do a work at home thing, you're going to find more people are going to want to meet people for lunch on the outside, like they do in business. And so, I think this offers opportunities to see how this will work out, because face-to-face interaction is very possible. And you know, interaction like this is as good, but it's not as good as sitting down and having lunch together and chatting. You know, we got to remember the personal contact should be cherished. Not feigned.

Randall Duchesneau: Vincenzo what's been your experience at Coca-Cola? And how do you see telework impacting not only Coca-Cola but other businesses?

Vincenzo Piscopo: You know, it's... for me, this has been a very interesting change, learning actually and you know, and if we want to be extremely -- a positive person. I mean there is a little bit of benefit with this COVID craziness and that has helped a couple of things for people with disabilities. One thing is that Jim mentioned the equalization of technology, right? You know, one thing that I think COVID and working from home has done is one that has made the accommodation mainstream, right? You know, now we're not worried about accommodations for people with disabilities. We are worried about accommodations, period, right? And that is serving organizations to realize the importance of accommodations, and how accommodations can make a huge difference in the productivity of people. So I think that's a side benefit that we're getting, that I think is being very interesting. The other thing that I feel, is a benefit for people with disability is that our houses normally, generally, are already accessible, right? We have already provided our own accommodations to ourselves. So if you give me the opportunity to work from home, you don't have to worry about if I'm able to move around or not, and you don't have to worry and I'm talking about myself, being paraplegic, you don't have to worry about my bathroom being accessible or my house being accessible, or my environment being accessible, because I made it accessible already for me. So I'm making it very very easy for people, so that might relieve a little bit of that anxiety that, you know, organizations might have with hiring people with disabilities. The other things I know – two more things, and then I'll shut up – is that it is definately making people realize that working from home can work, and can be very effective, and for some people with disabilities, the opportunity to work from home is fundamental. And with this, what it's doing is showing people that actually working from home - you're as productive or more productive. You know, I can tell you my example. I'm more productive working from home, because my commute is one and a half-hour. And it takes me for me one hour to get ready in the morning. So those are two and a half hours that I'm dedicating to work, to my health, to my mental health, and all that - making me more productive. However, one thing that I think has become extremely important for employees, and for employers is to actually have a clear understanding of their community of people with disabilities and I'm doing a very good self-identification campaign. Because the more that we know what is the population of people with disabilities in organization, the better job that we as organizations can make, to make sure that all the community is taken care of in this remote environment.

Randall Duchesneau: Thank you very much Vincenzo, and following up on that, as companies look to build their future workforce and prepare for the new 21st century challenges, how should they look to integrate job seekers with disabilities into their talent pipelines, and how can they build leadership opportunities for existing employees with disabilities? Vincenzo, would you like to answer first?

Vincenzo Piscopo: Oh sure. So I mean that's.. a very interesting question, and, the first thing that I always say, keep in mind that this is a journey, it's a marathon, and it's gonna take time and all that and there is many elements that you have to work at the same time to make sure that everything is effective, so it's not just one thing. There are many things related to your culture, to your infrastructure, and all that -- that you can do. So there is not one thing that can be done to accomplish this. However, from a tactical perspective, I think the first thing, from a strategy perspective, one thing is that we have to have purposeful recruiting, and that's something that I know it makes people nervous sometimes. Because some people might feel that they're being -- people able-bodied might feel that they're being discriminated against, but I think at this point, same as it happens to our African American community, there needs to be purposeful recruiting, purposeful hiring. So we have to go to campuses and actually hire for people with disabilities, and be very vocal to the fact that we hire for people with disabilities, because that creates -- obviously you're more effective, because you're actually going for that minority, but also because it sends a message to everybody that, you know, hiring with people with disabilities is a thing, and it's an important thing for organizations. So that's a...

Randall Duchesneau: Yeah, you definitely made some great points there, Vicenzo. Jim, do you have anything to add as your perspective from JPMorgan Chase?

Jim Sinocchi: Yeah, I don't -- I don't think we should shoo away, or tout -- telework, or work from home as the end-all, I think, because people love to meet people face to face. That's how you build relationships. You don't – I don't know that, if you want to build a meaningful relationship with people, you need some human contact, you need to go to lunch with them, you need to talk to them, you need to take a walk with them at lunchtime or whatever. You got to get to know each other. And I think...

Randall Duchesneau: Do you think those meaningful relationships are important to help employers develop the pipeline and

Jim Sinocchi: Yeah.

Randall Duchesneau: Promote their employees internally to leadership?

Jim Sinocchi: That's where I was getting at. You have to meet people, and watch them in action, and see what they're made of to become a manager, to become an executive director, to become a director, etcetera. You need that camaraderie with people as well. So I'm not gonna – yes, some people can work from home. There are telemarketers, there are teledoctors. There are a lot of things like that. At the end of the day, the relationship building one-on-one is still important. I think our new generation of people are more comfortable with technology and telework, but I've still seen -- in my long career in business, I'm going on 43 years in business, and I'm not subscribing to this because I can never go play golf with the business leaders because I'm in a wheelchair. And I can't even play miniature golf in a wheelchair. But the point is that people love getting together, getting to know each other, getting to build trust, and as good as technology is with communicating, you know trust is not sacred on the internet. You don't know who you're talking to sometimes, right? In business, it's different. You've got set up security systems where you talk to people at work, but even at our bank, we have firewalls to protect accounts, but we also have firewalls to protect us from intruders that want to do bad things to the firm. So I think we've got to look at disability inclusion as a way that telework is an option for those people that think they want to get there and do it, but I don't think working at home all the time is a path to executive leadership. So I think bigger than just the job, my job at Chase is to get my people with disabilities who come in at entry level positions, and I'm looking for pathways for them to get to leadership.

Randall Duchesneau: Exactly. So when it comes to building more inclusive businesses, many companies have specific diversity programs for different categories of diversity, such as hispanic, women, LGBTQIA, and people with disabilities. How can we build more synergy and solidarity across these different aspects of diversity? Do you have any perspective on that Jim?

Jim Sinocchi: I do. I am – I talk about this a lot and some people may think it's derogatory, but the disability community is considered the runt of the litter in my history. That means we're the smallest dog in the group of dogs that are out there. So the big dogs are Women, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ, etcetera. And I think we take a back seat because, our visible features of disability make people nervous, because they don't understand what we have. And we're still hidden And so they don't know whether they're gonna say something politically incorrect, or catch something from us. And so it's our responsibility as disability folks, disability workers, managers, executives, to make them feel comfortable for it. I can't tell you how many times – and at IBM – over here it was a little different because I ended up being in the higher ranks of the business, but at IBM, I was a corporate director, but early in my career, people were wondering how can I be a manager? How could I be a leader? How could I have a staff of 12 people? Are they all here to help me or am I there to lead them? So I think that we have to work on that, and I don't think it'll ever change because if you look back on 30 years, we're still fighting the basics of disability inclusion. And some banks or companies are doing it better than others, but overall we still got a long way to go to build that that camaraderie up and that – How do you allay the doubts of people that think you're less than because you are disabled?

Randall Duchesneau: Vincenzo, you grew up in Venezuela, you were born in Venezuela. How does your perspective coming from another country impact how you see the intersectionality between different diversity groups and people with disabilities?

Vincenzo Piscopo: Yeah, so I think that this is something that – often times the intersectionality, what it does is it makes the discrimination and the isolation exponential. Because, if you're a woman, you know you might be discriminated because you're a woman. But if you're a black woman you can be even more discriminated, because on top of that, you're a black woman. And if you're a black woman with a disability, you know you are triple discriminated, so making it even more complicated. And that happens also with hispanics, right? With Latinx, in my case, people might have the first reaction of wow, this guy has an accent, and have all the biases that it creates, all the unconscious biases that it creates when you talk to somebody that has an accent. And then you see me on a wheelchair and then increases on top of that all the biases that people might have with that. So that's the negative side of that. The positive side of that is that, because what I said before – the evolution of corporate responsibility and social justice and all that, all those groups working together can actually create synergies that make them as a group more powerful. So for example, talking about ERGs, right? So at Coke we have LGBTQ ERG, African-Americans, Women ERG, Disability – when all those ERGS work together for something, the impact is amazing, and the impact in the short term, and in the long term becomes incredible in the long term, because of that awareness that it creates in the short term, because it actually addresses specific problems that have impacted and affect all those minorities.

Randall Duchesneau: Thank you Vincenzo, and myself as a Korean American, I've also experienced some of the same things as you. Could we just wrap up with a quick sentence each from you on what advice you could give to job seekers? Jim, perhaps we'll start with you.

Jim Sinocchi: Yeah. I want to let job seekers know that at Chase, we hire people who are qualified to work here. Not everybody could work at a bank and you need the skills to do that. Now by saying that, I want to tell you that we've hired over 4200 people since I've been here, when I got here in 2016. And so I've got bankers, I've got people on the IDD Spectrum working for us too, who are doing a level of work that we need done, where they get paid equally for that kind of labor. I've got about 185 people on the autism spectrum working here and I got a variety of people who are blind, mobility impaired and deaf. We opened a bank near Gallaudet University that's deaf friendly, with signers, and interpreters, and technology. We plan to do more of that across the country. And so we're building from a platform that we hope where we could become a great equalizer for people with disabilities in terms of our services. I don't think that it's a layup to do hiring, because when you hire people with disabilities, We get – of the 4,200, we have people with a range of disabilities. So what that forced us to do, for example, is set up an accommodations team that has delivered over 20,000 accommodations in the last four years including furniture. We set up a standard and a policy. We trained 14,000 managers. We've done a lot to build this inclusive culture and that takes time. And it's a systems approach. It's not hiring one person at a time, which is how it starts, But how do you support those people when they come in here? You could hire them, but if you do nothing for them, they will fail. So how do you create a culture that's inclusive and recognizes the talents of everyone? That's the hard part of the work as well.

Randall Duchesneau: Definitely. You bring up some interesting challenges. I'd like to thank both of our panelists, Jim and Vincenzo for participating today. And I'll turn it back over to the honorable, Steve Bartlett.

Hon. Steve Bartlett: Wow! Randy, Vincenzo, Jim, well, we're just awash in insights and ways of looking at this complex issue through the lens of diversity. Thank you. Thank you very much. You're both great. We're gonna share one more video that has been added for this panel. It's from a fellow advocate for disability employment, and also a long time friend of mine. Tom Ridge and I came to congress together back in the day. And we've been friends and colleagues ever since. He went on to become Governor of Pennsylvania. I only went to the Mayor of Dallas, so, go figure. But he's the current chairman of the National Organization on Disability, Tom Ridge - so he's brought us a special message. If you'll start the video.

[Tom Ridge Video]

Steve Barlett: Thank you, Tom. It's really great to see what you're doing. We're so – I so much appreciate your words about the importance of bipartisanship in our democracy, working together and sharing the vision in a collective force to achieve that vision and achieve those goals. I do appreciate your steadfast commitment to this cause through your ongoing work as chairman of, with our close partner, the National Organization on Disability. Its CEO Carol Glazer is a shining example of leadership self-advocacy and collaboration. The ADA happened because of bipartisan teamwork. Today, we opened with Representative Brad Sherman, a Democrat, and we closed with Former Governor Tom Ridge, a Republican. We at RespectAbility uphold the value of bipartisanship and we invite all of you and all of us to reclaim this critical value. A value that is essential to our democracy and is essential to move progress forward for all people with disabilities living in our nation. This pandemic has brought us and taught us the honorable term that we now value. The term is essential worker. Let us claim then the term essential bipartisanship. So thank you Randy, Vincenzo, Jim, Mark, and Tom for participating in this session. All of you are true leaders of disability employment. We hope everyone found the panel informative, educational and pragmatic. I want to thank all the speakers and you for joining us today. Also a reminder, thanking our sponsors: Comcast NBC Universal, Sony Pictures Entertainment, The Walt Disney Company, and Murray/Reese Foundation for making this event possible. So before you go, I'm going to ask you, our viewers and partners, to make a difference on behalf of people with disabilities. Your help is needed, and it's free. And it doesn't take much time - just a commitment. So from the safety of your home, or wherever you're watching right now, you can help people with disabilities by contacting your local officials and reporters to tell them that you care about people with disabilities, and you want to know what they're doing to make a difference, and we're going to make it easy for you. For the multi-taskers out there, you just open up a second screen. Go to www.voteability.com. There you will find a very easy to use landing page, and in a few moments of your time, you can put in your name, zip code, and message. It will go directly to your elected officials and local members of the media. Please open another screen, while we close out and go to VoteAbility.com. Do it right now, let your voice be heard. Thanks for making a difference. Thanks to you for joining, and for reaching out to your elected officials right now. See you tomorrow.