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HELP WANTED: SMALL BUSINESS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

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HELP WANTED: SMALL BUSINESS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2016

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:03 a.m., in Room 2360, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Steve Chabot [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Chabot, Luetkemeyer, Hanna, Huelskamp, Brat, Radewagen, Curbelo, Hardy, Kelly, Velázquez, Clarke, Chu, Lawrence, and Adams.

Also Present: Representative Smith

Chairman CHABOT. The committee will come to order. I want to thank everyone for being here today. Before I give my opening statement I would like to welcome here the co-chairs of the Autism Caucus, Chris Smith from New Jersey and Mike Doyle from Pennsylvania, his Democratic counterpart. We thank you all for your hard work in this area and appreciate you being here today.

Often when this committee meets, it is to discuss the challenges facing small businesses. Today however, we get to talk about some of the truly inspiring opportunities they can offer. After all, small businesses are not just the backbone of the American economy, but they are also at the heart of our committee. Today the committee will hear about the role small businesses are playing in expanding employment opportunities for all Americans.

I am proud to welcome our four witnesses today who have had such a positive affect on their communities. I am especially pleased that one of our witnesses, Ms. Terri Hogan is visiting us today from my hometown of Cincinnati, and we welcome you here. As we do all our witnesses I will introduce all of you here shortly.

For adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities or disorders, finding and sustaining employment can be a real challenge. These individuals can be overlooked when employment opportunities arise and too often they are shut out from the workplace all together. Yet across the country we are seeing examples of how small businesses, with their ability to adapt and accommodate, are able to provide employment opportunities to those who might not otherwise get a chance.

Today we are excited to hear about some of these stories and learn more about the ways individuals who may have special needs are contributing to small business success all over the country. As we approach the end of May, graduation season is officially upon us. Thousands of young adults will be leaving school, ready and

eager to join the workforce. This new chapter in their life can present challenges for everyone. But for those with intellectual or developmental disorders or disabilities this can be especially daunting. These men and women leaving school might face a future where the prospect of finding employment is unknown and options for the future seem limited. Thankfully small businesses working to expand opportunities are allowing individuals with special needs to enter the workforce and grow their quality of life.

I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today and applaud them for the example they have set in showing the tremendous impact expanding employment opportunities can have.

I now would like to yield to the Ranking Member Ms. Velázquez for her opening remarks.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for putting together this hearing. I am very, very excited. For most people work is closely aligned with feelings of self worth and a general sense that one is contributing to society. Generally when small businesses are succeeding the result is greater employment opportunities for all Americans. Small businesses create jobs in their communities, opening doors for their neighbors. We have seen this phenomenon recently as the U.S. economy recovered from the Great Recession.

Today we are in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job growth in history. In fact, 10 million jobs have been created since 2009. And thanks largely to small businesses the overall unemployment rate has been cut in half from 10 percent to 5 percent. Unfortunately, one particular demographic continues facing persistent challenges when it comes to securing employment not only when there is an economic downturn, but in good times as well.

Sadly, those with autism spectrum disorder or down syndrome have an unemployment rate significantly higher than the national average. It is estimated that 90 percent of these individuals are unemployed or under employed. Regrettably this population faces an uphill battle to overcome false perceptions about their abilities and their capacity as employees.

Many of those on the autism spectrum excell in specialized kinds of work like software testing, lab work and proofreading. They observe details that others miss and are able to focus for long periods of time. Naturally they take well deserved pride in their distinctive abilities and have a typical ways of viewing the world. Similarly, individuals with down syndrome are valued members of the workforce when given the opportunity. They are proven to be efficient and loyal employees.

Yet despite their proven abilities, desire to work and the benefits to all parties involved, a lack of opportunity remains. Enhancing opportunities for these employees is not only beneficial from a business perspective but also from an overall society perspective as well. Research shows employing individuals with disabilities reduces reliance on publicly funded adult services. With increased public awareness and inclusion efforts many of the false notions about those with autism and down syndrome has been dispelled.

Today thousands of small businesses are providing not only job opportunities but career opportunities to these individuals. We are very happy to have some of them here today with us to share their

experiences. If there is one thing entrepreneurs are good at, it is creating opportunity.

Today small businesses are at the forefront of creating innovative business models that employ these competent and hardworking individuals. I hope today's hearing will further dispel misconceptions while making clear that what we can do to further facilitate small business employment for all Americans. On that note, I thank the witnesses for testifying and I look forward to your story. Thank you.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much.

I will now explain our lighting system here. Each of you gets 5 minutes to testify and then we will ask questions for 5 minutes. The green light will be on for 4 minutes, the yellow light will be on for 1 minute, to let you know time is wrapping up, and when the red light comes on and we would ask you to stay within that if at all possible. If you need a little extra time that is okay, but try to stay within it to the degree possible.

I might note we may be—we will be interrupted by votes at some point we think around 10:30 or so, so if you hear buzzers go off and members go scurry out of the room that is what is happening. We will adjourn for a little while, and then some of us will come back and some of us will head to our districts. I guarantee I will be back and the ranking member will be back.

Without further adieu I would like to introduce our very distinguished and very interesting panel here today. Our first witness will be Lisa Goring. Ms. Goring is the Executive Vice President of Programs and Services at Autism Speaks where she has worked since 2006. She has been there 10 years. Under Lisa's leadership Autism Speaks has provided resources and support to hundreds of thousands of families and individuals with autism all across the country. Lisa has implemented many grant programs over the years to expand services and support for people of all ages with autism and is working with Autism Speaks on its small businesses initiative. We welcome you here this morning.

Our next witness will be Ms. Terri Hogan, who is coming to us from the great city of Cincinnati. Ms. Hogan is the Chairman and CEO of Contemporary Cabinetry East, a small business with around 70 employees. Seeing the need for inclusion and diversity in the workplace, Ms. Hogan has through her business looked to provide opportunities to individuals who might otherwise be overlooked or shut out from employment. Her business has also partnered with local schools and organizations to provide career exploration tours to connect real world labor skills with the academic and life skills curriculum. This helps students gain the skills needed to get into the labor force.

I would now like to yield to the ranking member for the purpose of introducing another witness, Rajesh Anandan.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to introduce Rajesh Anandan who is the cofounder of ULTRA Testing, a high quality software testing company employing individuals on the autism spectrum. Rajesh began his career at Microsoft and then joined Bain & Company where he focused on business incubation and growth strategy. For the past decade he has worked in the impact sector, including setting up and running the private sector

division at the Global Forum to fight AIDS, TB and malaria. Rajesh is a member of advisory board of the Asperger syndrome training and employment partnership, the steering committee of the UNICEF Global Innovation Center and serves as an adviser to a number of technology startups. He holds degrees in computer science and electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Welcome.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. We thank the ranking member for that introduction. I would now like to introduce our final witness Mr. Joe Steffy. Mr. Steffy is coming to us from Louisberg, Kansas, where he is better known as Poppin' Joe, owner of Poppin' Joe's Gourmet Kettle Korn. He is a shining example as to the tremendous promise everyone is capable of achieving. When others sought to limit his potential, Mr. Steffy and his family developed a business plan. Through his hard work he has grown his business to where Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn can be found at Walmarts, fairs, craft shows, car shows and events throughout Kansas and Georgia, and hopefully some day in my office.

Mr. Steffy has also shipped his kettle corn to our troops serving overseas. We would have welcomed him bringing popcorn here today, but our rules prohibit bringing food into the room, so unfortunately we probably won't be doing that today, unless he is really persistent.

He is accompanied today by his father, Ray Steffy, who will also be available to answer questions. We welcome his father as well. Once more we thank all the witnesses for being here. Ms. Goring, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENTS OF LISA GORING, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, AUTISM SPEAKS, NEW YORK, NY; TERRI HOGAN, OWNER, CONTEMPORARY CABINETRY EAST, CINCINNATI, OH; RAJESH ANANDAN, CO-FOUNDER, ULTRA TESTING, NEW YORK, NY; AND JOE STEFFY, OWNER, POPPIN JOE'S GOURMET KETTLE KORN, LOUISBURG, KS, ACCOMPANIED BY RAY STEFFY

STATEMENT OF LISA GORING

Ms. GORING. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about a topic that is of great importance to the autism community, advancing the role and impact of small businesses and employing individuals with autism.

As mentioned I am the executive vice president of program services at Autism Speaks. Autism Speaks is the world's leading science and advocacy organization. We are dedicated to funding research to improve the lives of people with autism, increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders, and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families.

Autism Speaks aims to support adults on the spectrum in part by providing the tools and resources to expand employment opportunities and workplace supports for individuals with autism. As the largest wave of children with autism age out of our school system one of our community's most daunting challenges is finding em-

ployment. It is being tackled by entrepreneurs and small businesses. Across the country small businesses are utilizing unique flexibility to create accommodating and innovative business models that sustainably employ individuals with autism, expose students earlier in their education to real world work experience, and provide opportunities for work based learning and technical skill attainment.

National data indicates that the vast majority of adults with autism are un or under employed, with some estimates ranging as high as 90 percent. While 50,000 young adults with autism each year age out of the school system in the United States, only a fraction of those are gainfully employed in jobs that match their capabilities.

Autism Speaks is working with small businesses to improve employment outcomes. Over the past 3 years our collaborative efforts with small business communities strive to spread awareness about the benefits of employing people with autism, to develop innovative and sustainable business models, and hiring practices, and to provide technical assistance to implement best practices.

What we have learned is clear. The innovation and flexibility unique to small businesses and entrepreneurs enable them to lead the way in employing individuals—small businesses are in a position not only to develop new models that employ individuals with autism, but to innovate in a way that directly responds to local labor market needs.

The connection many small businesses have with their community is vital to creating the partnerships necessary to transition students into local workforce and share best practices with other businesses and nurture workforce comprised of people of all abilities.

Businesses hire employees to fill a need and support their businesses bottom line. Small businesses with workforce that include employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities consistently report that these employees performance equals or exceeds that of their coworkers.

The popular narrative that has largely been based on a sense of corporate social responsibility must shift to business centered and represent the worth, the capabilities and the efficiencies that individuals with autism can bring to the workplace.

Employers are often unaware of the low-cost, high-impact, of work accommodations and benefits of hiring individuals with autism. All employees need the right tools and work environment to effectively perform their jobs. Similarly, people with autism may need some adjustments or accommodations to maximize their productivity. Employers report that a high percentage of job accommodations cost nothing and the rest typically cost less than $500.

From our small businesses initiative we learned that creating communities of experts and invested partners who share information about accommodations and best practices is essential to help businesses utilize this untapped workforce.

Looking forward, leveraging small businesses as a key partner in workforce development strategies could better prepare students with autism for employment and provide employers with a pipeline of skilled workers.

National, State and local workforce development strategies should collaborate with small businesses to increase access to work based learned and work experience for secondary school students to raise employment and independent living aspirations of people with autism and their families while demonstrating local employers the value that individuals with autism bring to the workplace.

Individuals with autism deserve the opportunity to contribute as productive workers and actively improve their quality of life. Businesses today have the opportunity to access a largely untapped labor pool of qualified job candidates who happen to be on the autism spectrum.

Once again Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Velázquez, I thank you and the committee for this opportunity to testify today. I have submitted additional remarks for the record and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Thank you so much.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. It has been brought to my attention that Poppin' Joe, Mr. Steffy, actually does have popcorn here that will be available at the end of the hearing. It is an encouragement for folks to stick around all the way through the end. Let's hear it for Joe. Excellent. Thank you.

Ms. Hogan you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF TERRI HOGAN

Ms. HOGAN. Good morning Chairman Chabot, and Ranking Member Velázquez, and members of the committee. I am Terri Hogan, speaking on behalf of Contemporary Cabinetry East located in Cincinnati, Ohio. My title is CEO and chairman and we are certified NW BOS, women owned business.

We began as a very small family business in 1984. My husband and I purchased the company from the family in 2003 and have grown the business steadily and today employ 70 individuals. My husband Paul and I volunteer in the special needs community and are raising our 17 year old son, Bailey, who has autism. We understand the concern of families who are facing transition into adulthood, and those who have already reached this stage. What happens now is a question frequently asked: How can our young adults become independent members of the community?

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you to discuss how we can address these concerns and to discuss inclusion in a small business workplace. We need to educate others so they can begin to take the d-i-s out of disabilities and replace it with abilities. We also need to make small businesses aware of the huge untapped resource, people with diverse abilities.

Hiring people who are physically, genetically or cognitively diverse is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. I believe the Cincinnati small business community needs to work harder to address inclusion in the workplace.

Over a year ago our company hired Mike, and Mike is here with us today. When he started he had a job coach working with him and after a few months he became self-sufficient. Job coaches shadow employees and empower them to improve performance. Since Mike has been with us he has become a model employee. He comes to work on time. He is reliable, he has raised morale, brought com-

munity awareness and has caused others to have a broader perspective. He has also developed many friends at our company. For the business, Mike has helped to develop a healthier bottom line and everyone works harder because of Mike.

A quote from Employment First fact sheet, when businesses identify the strengths of employees with disabilities then put them in jobs that match their skills, those employees turn out to be faithful, low turnover, hardworking employees. These special employees come to work on time and when scheduled and have lower sick time off.

In conclusion I hope you all leave here today with a better understanding of how inclusion in the workplace adds to the diversity of the workplace environment and may lead to a more diverse customer base.

The positive effect these individuals have on lifting the morale of our employees and set role model work ethic examples. Begin career and technical education in middle and high schools so students can learn these skills before they face transition into adulthood. Take the d-i-s out of disabilities and focus on abilities.

Here is a quote I recently read and I feel it is applicable to this discussion. "We become like our friends. The people we surround ourselves with either raise or lower our standards." Mike has raised everyone's standards at CCE, and hiring Mike was the best business decision I have ever made.

Thank you for your time and attention. Let's go to work. Also, thank you Congressman Chabot for supporting the ABLE to Work Act.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Mr. Anandan, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF RAJESH ANANDAN

Mr. ANANDAN. I would like to start with a video.

[Video shown.]

Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez, members of the committee, thank you for your continued efforts to support small businesses in the U.S. My name is Rajesh Anandan and I am one of the cofounders of ULTRA Testing, a company I started 3 years ago with my old College roommate Art Shectman who is not here with us today, someone has to run the business. Together we started a company that we believe will revolutionize the software testing industry. More importantly, we are building a business that we hope will prove the tremendous economic opportunity to be unlocked by employing individuals on the autism spectrum.

David, whom you saw in the video, is one of our team members at ULTRA. David graduated in 2001 with a computer science degree and he was eager to start work. He interviewed for dozens, and applied for dozens of positions, but unfortunately was not able to find job in his field or any field. He was eager to work so he started volunteering at a computer repair shop, and helping friends and family with their IT issues.

For over a decade David tried to find paid work without success. In 2014 he applied for a part-time software testing position at ULTRA and successfully completed our rigorous recruiting process. Within a month after starting work he was working on billable cli-

ent projects, generating an income for himself, revenue for the company and value for clients. Within a year, based on consistently excellent results that David produced, we offered him a full-time position at ULTRA. Today, thanks to his heightened abilities around patent recognition, logical reasoning, his innate curiosity about technology, his thirst to learn and improve, his willingness to persevere through difficult and challenging tasks and projects, and his commitment to work hard and do his best every single day.

David is one of the best software testers we have on our team at ULTRA and I would argue in the world. There are 3-1/2 million Americans on the autism spectrum and by some estimates one-third of this community have graduated high school and in some cases college. Many individuals on the spectrum, like David, are extremely capable and willing to work hard and would make a fantastic addition to any team or organization. Yet over 80 percent of this population is not employed.

When my cofounder Art and I founded ULTRA, 3 years ago, we set out to prove that we can build a technology company that brought excellence to our industry by employing a truly diverse workforce of people with different abilities.

Today we have team members working in 13 States across the U.S., including the home states of most members of this committee. Over 75 percent of our employees have Asperger syndrome or a similar autism spectrum profile. 100 percent of us believe that it is our differences that make us better.

Thanks to our exceptional team, ULTRA has tripled our revenues 2 years in a row. We have achieved profitability and we have consistently outperformed our competition. And to do that, we haven't used a single dollar of philanthropic or government support. Instead we developed an entirely new operational model for running a business, one that reinvented how recruiting and training works, that re-imagined how projects and teams need to be managed and redesigned how we communicate and interact with each other.

Today, thanks to widely available tools and technologies that allow for data driven hiring that don't require resumes or interviews that promote digital first communication that don't mean you have to be showing up to an office and can work from an environment that is comfortable for you, and that allow remote teams to work as efficiently as teams that are co-located. Any business small or large can leverage the talents of individuals anywhere in this country, including individuals on the autism spectrum.

Our experience at ULTRA has proven that by doing so, companies can not only gain highly capable employees but can also achieve a consistently superior result and a competitive advantage. Thank you.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. Mr. Steffy, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF JOE STEFFY

Mr. JOE STEFFY. Good morning, Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez, and members of the Small Business Committee.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you about my journey from no expectations to becoming a successful businessowner. It is an honor for me to be here.

I was welcomed to life with "here is your label". I was welcomed to school with "here is your label". Then came welcome to adult life with "here is where you belong". Labels create low expectations, the worse disability of all. My parents attended a Kansas partners in policymaking training when David Hammis presented. They learned that I and others with significant challenges could own their own business.

Mom wrote the business plan, dad continued the trial work period with me. The data collecting was useful for developing the business plan. My future in the kettle corn business looked promising. My startup team included the Kansas Council for Developmental Disabilities. Another member of my startup team was Social Security, vocational rehabilitation provided support for the specific business equipment and supplies. My PASS plan let me set aside money to achieve my specific work goals. I submitted my business plan to each of my team members. Their support made it possible for me to become a sole proprietor of Poppin' Joe's Kettle Korn in April 2005. The first 5 years shows a steady increase in sales. Each year since remains constant, 2015 grossed $67,000. Please watch with me a few minutes of my work day.

[Video shown.]

Mr. JOE STEFFY. Owning my business works for me, it creates opportunities for me to grow as a person and to be an engaged, valued member of my community. With the right support system being a self supporting entrepreneur can happen. I love being Poppin' Joe. Thank you for inviting me. Have a poppin' great day.

Chairman CHABOT. Excellent. The gentleman's time has expired. Thank you very much, all four excellent testimony. The buzzer you heard was votes, we probably have time for one group of questions before we break. I will go ahead and recognize myself for 5 minutes and then after that we will adjourn, go vote, we will be gone for a while and then come back.

I will begin with Joe, you and your father Ray. First of all, I want to thank you for upgrading the pronunciation of my name to Chabot. It sounds much more distinguished than Chabot, the way we say it, so very good. That is the French pronunciation so you obviously did some research here.

What are some of the challenges that you faced in getting the businesses off the ground and how did you overcome those challenges, what recommendations would you have to others that might want to do something similar?

Mr. RAY STEFFY. Basically in the beginning Joe had a transition meeting with the school and they said that he had no attention span, couldn't keep on task, would probably never hold a job and that he would live in a group home the rest of his life. No one wants to hear that said about their child. I was determined, I was going to prove to this committee that he could work. It was from there that we found kettle corn as being a business with a number of different processes to making the product. That way Joe could move from one phase to another phase as he chose so he could keep

his attention span involved with it. That was one of the main things in the beginning.

For funding we were able to work with David Hammis and Cary Griffin and they showed us resources that we could go to, Social Security, DD Council in Kansas. All of those entities contributed money for him to get his equipment to start with. It was from there that we started just doing it to prove Joe could work, it was within a 5-year period of time that they indicated that we would be able—Joe would be able to own the business. That is how we got started.

We made the application, and on the 5th of April in 2005 he became the owner and has he has been the owner ever since.

Chairman CHABOT. In the film there it said they sold $6,000 worth of the product, but that is just that business, right? My understanding is the business makes——

Mr. RAY STEFFY. Yes. That is a cider mill there located in Louisberg and that is how much they paid Joe for his corn. Today they are selling over $10,000. They are selling close to $100 a week right now. When you get into the fall during cider season he will be selling up to a $1,000 a month.

Chairman CHABOT. That is just that one business.

Mr. RAY STEFFY. That is just one business. Yes.

Chairman CHABOT. Overall, not to be nosey but how successful is the business? The IRS wants me to ask this question.

Mr. RAY STEFFY. No, no. Right, right. He has been audited too. Basically he is selling upward of $70,000 worth of popcorn a year going by festivals and he has about five or six outlets where he sells retail to people, convenience stores, that kind of thing.

Chairman CHABOT. Congratulations, tremendous. Next question, Ms. Goring and Ms. Hogan let me ask you this real quickly, what perceptions do you hear from other businesses that are public about hiring folks that have challenges? How would you respond—how do you address those challenges, and the pre-disposition that some folks might have about hiring folks like this?

Ms. HOGAN. I think a whole lot of them have hesitations because they are not educated and they are not aware. One of the things that went to my advantage is I am raising a son with autism, so I understand the language. I get it. What is important is that we get out there and educate the small business owners that aren't like me.

How do we tap into them to tell them it is okay? I have quotes from our employees with me today and the things that they have said that Mike is has just totally brought their morale up, made them all better employees. Most of them have never been around anyone with special needs before. It has created awareness for them. It has done a lot better for our business. Because we are doing it, we need to work with you somehow and how can we get out there and talk to these people, how do we reach them? We can give them such a positive story about how good it is for their business.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you. In 25 seconds, Ms. Goring, which is all I have left, if you would like to respond.

Ms. GORING. I just think it is important that we utilize the skills that people with autism have and they are very good at complex,

yet repetitive tasks that others may not be at good at. It is really a competitive advantage.

Chairman CHABOT. Unfortunately, as I mentioned votes have been called so we are going to have to adjourn. My understanding is that we have votes that will take up about 45 minutes and then we will be back. Remember there is popcorn waiting after we get back so stick around. We are adjourned.

[Recess.]

Chairman CHABOT. I apologize for telling everybody it would be 45 minutes, and it ended up being a lot longer than that. Please accept our apologies, and I would now like to turn to the ranking member for 5 minutes. Thank you.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me first thank all of the witnesses for your moving, touching testimonies. I just went to the floor, as you know, to vote, and every member who was participating in the hearing were commenting how it has been an incredible experience. It is not every day that we have the opportunity to make a positive contribution in making sure that we open the door for opportunity for everyone in America. Thank you so very much.

Mr. Anandan, one of the common misconceptions about hiring individuals with disabilities is the need for costly accommodations in the workplace. Can you elaborate on the actions ULTRA took to accommodate its workforce?

Mr. ANANDAN. Of course. As a start-up, we don't have the ability to do costly anything. We run a lean company and a profitable business. A lot of the things we have put in place, I would argue, are things that any business should do to be more efficient. So we have communication tools we use and communication rules we have put in place that take a lot of the unwritten rules in a workplace that can be confusing and inefficient for anyone and make them explicit. For example, at ULTRA, you say don't email the client directly unless it is important, and if you do, keep it short. Well, what is important, and what is short? Is it really worth anyone's time to spend minutes or hours trying to figure out what that is? So at ULTRA, an email has to be 700 characters or less, no more than three bullet points, and if it takes two iterations to resolve it, you should talk live.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you. Can you elaborate on how the Federal Government can incentivize its larger contractors to utilize the diverse workforce and the talents of innovative small businesses like yours?

Mr. ANANDAN. As you know, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act includes a goal of seven percent of a contractor's workforce being individuals with disabilities. That goal doesn't do a lot to support small businesses who are not likely to be government contractors. On the other hand, they could serve as subcontractors. Yet small businesses are much more likely than large companies to be innovative and be proactive and employing individuals on the spectrum.

A change in policy that would allow a subcontractor's employees to count towards a large contractor's seven percent goal could catalyze an entirely new ecosystem of small businesses employing peo-

ple with disabilities partnering with large contractors and ultimately doing better business and being better for society.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you.

Ms. Goring, as you mentioned, your organization has hosted various programs, including town halls and small business accelerators together with—about employing those with ASD. What were some of the biggest lessons you learned from these programs? Are there any takeaways that would be helpful as the committee looks into further nontraditional employes?

Ms. GORING. We learned a couple of things. First we learned that you need to do what is best for the business, that it needs to make sense to the business, and you lead with that. You lead with the quality of the product or the service that you are providing, and then the second piece can be that it happens to be a person with autism.

But first and foremost you lead with that. To that point, we found that many of the small businesses and entrepreneurs maybe didn't have as much business sense as they needed to. So we provided them with information about how they can build their business, how to make it a profitable business. Then the third piece was to provide very specific training about what exactly the job entails, what outcomes you are looking for, and to break it down into small steps that are taught and then chained together. Those were some of the things that we found to be helpful.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you.

Ms. Hogan, in your testimony, you discuss how your company partners with local schools. Can you elaborate on how partnering with schools benefits both small businesses and individuals with disabilities seeking employment?

Ms. HOGAN. Are you asking how—what do we do to partner with these schools and how do we make this work?

One thing that is really important to me is that we bring the educators into our company and give them tours so that they can see the type of jobs that are out there. Then they need to go back to their schools to teach the skills. We have done this with several of the schools that are involved with the transition schools from ages 18 to 22. You have transition type schools available for those who wish to keep their students still learning. They go to Project SEARCH or something like that. It is important that they come and see what we have so that they can go back to these transition schools and teach the skills.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you. Yes. I yield back.

Chairman CHABOT. The gentlelady's time has expired. Thank you. The gentlelady yields back.

We are going to go into a second round. I know Mr. Smith is coming back to ask some questions. As I mentioned before, what happens oftentimes, this is our leave-town day. Once votes are over they scatter out of this place, all back to their districts.

Mr. Anandan, I will start with you this time. How has employing individuals with autism impacted your business bottom line? Is there any advice that you might want to give to other businesses out there that might consider working with folks with autism?

Mr. ANANDAN. I would say we consider ourselves one of the best software testing companies in the world because of the teams we

have and the team members we have. We have shown over and over again that when we have been benchmarked against other competitors, whether they are onshore or offshore, we do better. We have tested the Webbys, which are sort of like the Oscars of the Web. Within a week we found 20 percent more bugs and issues in the system than the partner they were working with. We won a project away from IBM and redid their work, and found 56 percent more bugs than the IBM team, for a Fortune 100 financial services company.

The reason we are able to do that is because three-quarters of our company have Asperger's Syndrome or a similar autism spectrum profile and have the exact profile we are looking for to do software testing. Our staff have the raw talent, but also the perseverance, the ability to learn, the ability to work with teams. We have managers that work with our teams who are veteran technologists who join our company to be part of a company that has purpose and a mission. We are able to attract fantastic talent into all roles.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. Ms. Hogan, I will turn to you next, if I can. In your testimony you had mentioned, what a great employee Mike is and works hard and comes on time and everything else. But most interestingly you said Mike has had a positive impact on other employees and made them better employees. Obviously, a small business owner, you know that is important to being successful and keeping everybody employed, and hiring more people. How has that been the case? Are there any stories or examples where the quality of Mike has improved the quality of your other employees?

Ms. HOGAN. I have brought with me some quotes and stories that several have written. I read through all of them. They are all amazing. This one is very interesting to me because it has a perspective of someone who didn't know anything about the disability world. He says, "My journey with Mike Ames began three months ago when I started at my new company, Contemporary Cabinetry East. I was assigned to edge banner and Mike was my co-worker on the machine. Mike is my first extended exposure to Down Syndrome. I will be honest. I entered our work relationship with a certain amount of trepidation. There were a lot of unknowns for me about what I was getting into. But at the same time, I was so excited about the opportunity presented to me.

In my limited experiences with Down Syndrome, I have always found those individuals to be gentle with incredibly big, loving hearts. Mike is no exception. My ignorance is being erased and my concerns have dissipated. I have to say that being around Mike is one of greatest joys I take from my job. His kindness and willingness to help anyone who asks is admirable. He has earned my respect and affection. Mike teaches me every day how to love more. His outlook reminds me to appreciate the things and people in my life. His presence somehow frees me so I can be in the me that sometimes I am afraid to be. I am a happier person because of my friend Mikey."

Chairman CHABOT. That is excellent. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

I have got like a minute and 15 seconds left in my time and two people I would like to ask questions to. So rather than ask you some long question, I would just like to say, I will start with you, Ms. Goring, and then Ray, we didn't have time to ask a lot of questions. For 30 seconds, what would you like to tell us that you already haven't told us that you think we ought to know that might be helpful to folks out there that would consider hiring folks with Autism or Down Syndrome or any other disability?

Ms. GORING. I think it is important to start early when they are still in school to work on some of the skills that are needed and to do that out in the workplace as much as possible in the real environment.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much.

Joe and Ray?

Mr. RAY STEFFY. Yes, basically I would say a similar thing as far as if they could—a lot of people that have significant disabilities, their ability to work either owning—working for someone in a job or owning a business, they will surprise you what they can do when they realize that it is theirs. That is the same with Joe. We had hoped he would come here, where he is doing this for us.

Chairman CHABOT. Very good. Thank you very much, my time is expired. You stayed right in that time. Excellent. Thank you.

I would like to turn to the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, thank you so very much, Chairman Chabot, for convening this extremely important and timely hearing, and of course, Nydia Velázquez, thank you. What a team of people committed to expanding job opportunities. Nobody creates more job opportunities than small business, and it is timely for other reasons.

The Autism Cares Act enacted on August 8 of 2014, as you know, the administration has been given marching orders to look at every aspect, all the inventories of what we are doing in every area, including employment, for persons with disabilities who have Autism. As Lisa said earlier, 50,000 every year matriculate from minor status to adult. They lose education and a whole lot of—you know, the challenges are almost overwhelming, and we will get a capacity assessment on or before August 8.

It will probably be late. All administrations are. But it will be a further blueprint. You are ahead of the game because small business will be playing, I think, the key role in that employment piece.

I also would point out that GAO also has undertaken a comprehensive study, assessment, unmet needs. The first iteration of that, which will come out probably in two or three reports, will be at in July. So again, Mr. Chairman, you are ahead of the game. Your witnesses were extraordinary. I can't wait to taste the popcorn, I think like everyone here. Thank you so very, very much for this.

Frankly our other committees of Congress should be following this lead, Education and Workforce and others in terms of how we position now for an employment breakout. There needs to be a radical transformation on our outdated, and I think very foolish, views as to what people with disabilities, including people with Autism, can contribute. The statement that was made by Joe Steffy about

how his IEP team had so utterly failed him with the low expectations game. He said, the worst disability, quoting him, is that of low expectations.

To Dad, thank you for the love you show for your son and that support. All of us need support teams. Persons with disabilities need those support teams as well. You are the quintessential example of a family who just gets behind their son lock, stock, and barrel.

I just have a few very, very couple of questions. I have many but I know there is a time limit. I had a hearing which we heard from SAP who is in the process of hiring 650 people by 2020. They already have 100. They made the exact same points that were made today, and made so eloquently. Part of their testimony was in spite of autism, and because of autism and the very special skill set that is brought to the employment table.

One of the things that was pointed out that I think—and perhaps our distinguished witnesses could speak to it, is that there needs to be a rethinking of talent acquisition processes at businesses, and the interview methods, which very often are a barrier that needs to be overcome. I also would ask you, if you could, to speak to the accommodations issue. There was a very important study. The Jan Workplace Accommodations Study updated in 2015 that said that 58 percent of the accommodations cost absolutely nothing.

It is a matter of will, political or employment will on the part of HR. Beyond that, it is only about $500. We are not talking about any kind of onerous burden financially to an employer, and then what they get in return in terms of loyalty, focus, the ability to do a job exceedingly well. I would also ask you, Lisa, if you could speak to, the Chambers working with you and NFIB and some of the other great groups that I know the chairman and Nydia Velázquez work with all the time. They have a very, important role to play with this as well. Again, the low expectations game, I know it is the educational piece, but how do we get those who are creating these IEPs to be much more knowledgeable about the very young person they are working with to say: You can really dream and dream large, and there is a whole path for you into the future. Those couple of things.

Ms. GORING. I think it starts with job sampling, to start that early. Small businesses are sometimes great opportunities to start some of that job sampling. You would be surprised some of the things, the preconceived notions of what you thought would be the right job for a person aren't always true, but that you can actually learn what they are good at.

In terms of the interview process, videos have been very, very helpful. You don't need to have that oral exchange as much when you can show a video of the terrific work that someone can do.

Then in terms of accommodations, I think we have all seen—some of the accommodations are no more than having a script in place for someone so they know exactly what to say when they pick up the phone. It could be writing out some of the rules that we take as sort of unwritten rules, but they are just laid out clearly. As ULTRA Testing did, 700 characters. It couldn't get more clear than that. Those are the types of accommodations that don't cost

anything but have tremendous dividends, not just for those with disabilities but really for everybody.

Mr. ANANDAN. First of all, I would like to say we don't see any of the changes we have made to how a business works as accommodations. That is how we collaborate. We are collaborating across people who have very different strengths. It just makes us better, we deliver better results, it makes us more efficient. I think if you take something like recruiting, a resume tells you how good someone is at writing a resume. A firm handshake and eye contact maybe works for your job, but it has nothing to do with software testing. For companies to be disciplined and rigorous about what it is that they are actually looking for, and collect data to validate that they are finding what they are getting, versus letting our natural, very natural human biases override our assessment of what someone is capable of is absolutely critical, and ultimately it will make sure that like we do, have a 95 percent success rate of someone coming through recruiting to out perform IBM.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. The gentleman's time has expired. Thank you very much.

I would like to yield such time as she might consume to the Ranking Member.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one more question.

I would like to ask Ray, what advice would you give similarly situated individuals and families that are interested in starting their own business?

Mr. RAY STEFFY. At different times when we have spoken to groups, especially parents that have kids with special needs, we kind of put it in this way. You have a choice. You can sit on the couch and worry about what is going to happen to your child when you are gone, and we all would agree worry takes energy. Or, you could take that same amount of energy and put it toward an endeavor that can develop to be something that could go on far beyond you. Basically that is kind of the message we have, and also helping them look for resources to bring funds available to start in an endeavor that the child is interested in, not the adult parents.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. So, you see a role for government to play?

Mr. RAY STEFFY. Oh, yes. Yes. I do.

Ms. Velázquez.

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman CHABOT. Thank you very much. The gentlelady yields back.

We want to thank this panel very much for this testimony. Sorry that you got interrupted by votes. It is an operational hazard around this place, especially on heading-out-of-town day.

It has been a great hearing. I think all the members here and the ones who were here obviously before but had to take off for their districts, we learned a lot. We will pass this on to our colleagues. Thank you for being an inspiration to all of us by doing your jobs and doing them well and helping others to do their jobs and just have a better life. Thank you so much.

I ask unanimous consent that members have 5 legislative days to submit statements and supporting materials for the record.

One more thing. Popcorn Joe has popcorn out there for everybody. Please enjoy that, thank you Joe and Ray for providing that for us.

If there is no further business to come before the committee, we are adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX



Testimony of
Lisa Goring, Executive Vice President for Programs and Services, Autism Speaks
Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All
Before the Small Business Committee
United States House of Representatives
May 19, 2016

Hello Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about a topic that is of great importance to the autism community: advancing the role and impact of small businesses in employing individuals with autism.

I am Lisa Goring, Executive Vice President of Programs & Services at Autism Speaks. Autism Speaks is the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research to improve the lives of people with autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. Our goal is to connect and empower people with autism and their families with information and resources to improve their quality of life today and into the future. Although we focus on the entire lifespan, Autism Speaks places a significant emphasis on supporting adults on the spectrum, in part by providing tools and resources to expand employment opportunities and workplace supports for individuals with autism.

As the largest wave of children with autism have aged out of school, one of our community's most daunting challenges — finding employment — is being tackled by entrepreneurs and small businesses. Across the country, small businesses are utilizing their unique flexibility to create accommodating and innovative business models that sustainably employ individuals with autism, expose students earlier in their education to real-world work experience, and provide opportunities for work-based learning and technical skill attainment.

Based on current best estimates, evidence suggests that as many as one percent of the adult population have autism. National data indicate that the vast majority of adults with autism are unemployed or underemployed. Moreover, it is estimated that a half million individuals with autism will enter adulthood over the next decade. But while approximately 50,000 young adults with autism reach working age every year in the United States, only a fraction of those individuals are gainfully employed in jobs that match their capabilities.

Employment is a critical component of building a full and productive adult life. Many individuals with autism are fully capable of employment and can have the skills to excel in their chosen field – including in a small business. The barriers to employment for many people with autism often stem from difficulties with communication and social interaction inherent in autism

spectrum disorders. As such, traditional job interviews and the acquisition of the "soft skills" needed to succeed in the workplace can be especially challenging. Small businesses are uniquely positioned to adapt quickly to the needs of these job seekers – including changing traditional interviewing and hiring practices – and then to benefit from the many strengths they have to offer.

Employing individuals with autism yields considerable benefits to the economy at-large, including decreased support costs for this population.[1] Estimated lifetime costs for supporting an adult with autism range between $1.4 million to $2.3 million, and the degree to which adults with autism fail to achieve independence contributes to increased lifetime care costs.[2] Research shows that employing individuals with autism, even with publicly-funded, intensive personal job supports, actually saves government costs by reducing the number of benefits that people with autism need when they are unemployed.[3] In addition, employing individuals with autism alleviates some of the pressure on the over-burdened adult service system; when employment supplants traditional adult day supports, we can achieve greater cost efficiency in these programs.[4]

Autism Speaks is working with an integral part of our nation's economy – small businesses – to improve employment outcomes for individuals with autism, increase chances for self-sufficiency and independence, and help businesses improve their bottom line. Over the past three years, our collaborative efforts with the small business community and relevant stakeholders strived to spread awareness about the benefits of employing individuals with autism, develop innovative and sustainable business models and hiring practices, and provide technical assistance to implement best practices. What we have learned is clear—**the innovation and flexibility unique to small businesses and entrepreneurs enable them to lead the way in employing individuals with autism**.

Small businesses are in a position not only to develop new models that employ individuals with autism, but also to innovate in a way that directly responds to local labor market needs. The connection many small businesses have with their community is vital to creating the partnerships necessary to transition young adults into the local workforce, share best practices with other local businesses, and nurture a workforce comprised of people with varying abilities.

Autism Speaks is currently undertaking a small business-focused employment initiative, *Advancing the Role and Impact of Small Businesses in Employing Adults with Autism*, which aims to increase these employment opportunities by connecting entrepreneurs with autism and other small business owners with autism-specific employment consultants who can provide customized technical assistance and help those businesses expand. **Autism Speaks believes the**

[1] Jacob, Andrew et al. "The Costs and Benefits of Employing an Adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review." Ed. Nouchine Hadjikhani. 2016.
[2] David Mandell, Sc.D., of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, and Martin RJ Knapp, Ph.D., of the London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012.
[3] Jacob, Andrew et al. "The Costs and Benefits of Employing an Adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review." Ed. Nouchine Hadjikhani. 2016.
[4] Ibid.

small business community is uniquely fit to overcome the historical barriers many adults with autism face in their efforts to join the workforce. The first step small businesses can take is to help change the narrative from one of charity to a business-centered representation of the value workers with autism bring to a business.

Changing the Narrative

Despite the low employment rate of individuals with autism, research indicates that they are willing and able to work.[5] A crucial barrier to these individuals being hired by businesses is low expectations. Too often employers and educators have low expectations about the employment capabilities of individuals with autism. The result is a lack of planning for the future, unavailable accommodations and supports, segregated working conditions, work at noncompetitive pay or no wages at all.

Businesses hire employees to fill a need and support their business' bottom line. However, the popular business narrative for hiring individuals with autism has largely been based on a sense of corporate social responsibility. This narrative must shift to be business-centered and represent the worth, capabilities, and efficiencies that individuals with autism bring to the workforce.

Small businesses with workforces that include employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities consistently report that these employees' performance equals or exceeds that of their coworkers without disabilities. The narrative must be changed to portray workers with autism as a valuable asset to the business, not a risk.

Businesses of all sizes and from all industries are beginning to recognize that hiring individuals with autism can be a cost-effective way to build a diverse and inclusive workforce. Changing the narrative means holding high expectations for individuals with disabilities to achieve employment success after graduating high school and investing in the training and preparation necessary to be a valuable employee. Beginning in secondary school, educators must consider employment as an option for the future and take the proper steps to plan for it – including working with local small businesses.

Invest in the Future

The lack of future planning creates a significant barrier to employment for individuals with autism. Over one-third of young adults with autism do not transition into employment after high school, which is much lower than young adults with other disabilities.[6] Career and technical skill development are often not prioritized for students with autism. This could be a result of the traditionally low expectations for students with autism to succeed in a career after graduation and other systemic barriers.

Many young adults with autism face a "service cliff" on the last day of high school, when the legal requirement for special education and support services ends and access to needed supports and services drops off dramatically. Federal special education law requires schools to help

[5] Roux, Anne M., Shattuck, Paul T., Rast, Jessica E., Rava, Julianna A., and Anderson, Kristy, A. *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood.* Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Research Program, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2015

[6] Ibid.

transition students with disabilities from school to work in the student's education plan starting at age 16, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences, and interests. A student's transition plan is a roadmap for the future. This is the time in a young person's life to develop the skills needed for employment that are matched with local labor force demand.

Historically, employment services for individuals with disabilities has not been centered on the strengths, interests, or preferences of the individual seeking employment. The focus has been on filling the jobs available rather than building skills around a career pathway. As for other working adults, individuals with autism deserve to follow and prepare for a career path matched with their skills, interests, and preferences.

Unfortunately, many young adults with autism do not have the opportunity to participate in structured high-quality programs designed to help them make informed choices about what careers they may want to pursue.[7] Youth with autism are frequently channeled into inadequate education or work programs because of low expectations and discriminatory assumptions about disability.[8]

The role of small business during this transition planning process can be monumental, as it connects students with autism to employment within their community. Small business can provide career exploration, internships, apprenticeships, skill development, and real-world work experience for students preparing for adulthood and employment.

Although these experiential learning opportunities have proven to be a huge predictor for employment success, nearly 26 percent of young adults with autism did not receive any services that could help them become employed, go on to post-secondary education, or live independently.[9] Small businesses can provide work-based learning experiences for students with autism as they commonly do with students without autism. Existing programs including vocational rehabilitation, special education and career and technology education can be leveraged by students with autism to help support them working in a small business. Without equitable access to these on-the-job learning experiences, students with autism will continue to face barriers accessing career pathways that lead so many other students to employment.

As part of the local and regional economy, small businesses provide an array of career pathway options for individuals with autism. If more small businesses provided work-based learning and employment opportunities, greater numbers of students with autism could match their interests and skills with the labor market demand to secure sustainable employment.

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[7] Luecking, R., & Fabian, E. S. (2000). Paid internships and employment success for youth in transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 23(2), 205-221.

[8] Fairweather, J.S., & Shaver, D.M. (1990). A troubled future? Participation in postsecondary education by youths with disabilities. Journal of Higher Education, 61, 332-348.

[9] Roux, Anne M., Shattuck, Paul T., Rast, Jessica E., Rava, Julianna A., and Anderson, Kristy, A. *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood.* Philadelphia, PA: Life Course Outcomes Research Program, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University, 2015

Effective job matching between the person and their environment, when combined with the use of appropriate supports, allows adults with autism to be productive and valuable to their employers, ultimately maintaining their ongoing employment.[10] Educating businesses on the use of accommodations and supports could lead to more recruitment and hiring of individuals with autism.

Benefits of Employing Individuals with Autism

Autism Speaks and many other organizations are working hard to educate the business community about people with autism and what they are truly capable of. Employers are often unaware of the common strengths shared by many people with autism, including intense attention to detail, commitment to quality and consistency, creative and "out of the box" thinking, excelling on repetitive tasks, lower turnover rates and absenteeism, honesty and loyalty. These qualities have been verified by business that have benefited from recent autism-specific hiring initiatives. Such companies have also recognized the need to better identify with their customer base, a growing percentage of whom is personally impacted by autism.

Employers are also often unaware of the low cost and high impact of workplace accommodations and benefits of hiring individuals with autism. All employees need the right tools and work environment to effectively perform their jobs. Similarly, individuals with autism may need workplace adjustments, or accommodations, to maximize their productivity.

Enhancing the opportunities for individuals with autism to find sustainable employment is beneficial from a societal perspective, but also from an economic perspective. Employers benefit by retaining valuable employees, improving productivity and morale, reducing workers' compensation and training costs, and diversifying their workforce. These benefits can be obtained with little investment. Employers report that a high percentage (58%) of job accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only $500.[11] Adults with autism can maintain consistent hours worked per week for significant periods of time, demonstrating reliability.[12] Employers have also found workers with autism to be their most loyal and dedicated employees.

Autism Speaks' Small Business Initiative

While research shows that people with autism make excellent employees, not all small businesses know how to effectively recruit, retain, and advance individuals with autism. From Autism Speaks' Small Business initiative, we learned that creating communities of experts and invested partners who share information about accommodations and best practices is essential to helping small businesses utilize this untapped workforce.

Our goals for this continuing initiative are simple: first, we aim to increase employment opportunities for all adults with autism in the United States; and second, we are committed to becoming a central resource where employers – both small and large – can share models and best practices, find useful resources to help enhance and grow their own initiatives, and provide

[10] Hagner D, Cooney BF. "I Do That for Everybody": Supervising Employees With Autism. Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities. 2005

[11] Job Accommodation Network. "Workplace accommodations: Low cost, high impact" Original 2005. Updated 2015.

[12] Schaller J, Yang NK. "Competitive employment for people with autism: correlates of successful closure in competitive and supported employment". Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin. 2005

support and information to individuals and families, service providers, schools, community partners and committed employers who are hiring adults with autism.

We developed a database on AutismSpeaks.org and another platform where interested parties can share information, learn from one another and grow their networks in order to create greater opportunities for workers with autism. Our Family and Adult Services Team hosted a series of Town Hall-style meetings across the country to spread the word about small businesses that had promising practices for replication and engaged members of each community in dynamic discussion about opportunities that small businesses have in their local areas. At each town hall, the panelists and employers in the audience spoke of the strengths and achievements of their employees with autism and the success of their businesses as a result. The Town Halls convincingly demonstrated that small businesses and entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to respond to the increasing numbers of adults with autism who are eager to work.

Autism Speaks sought to replicate the successes of promising small businesses and to help implement best practices in different regions of the United States. Our goal was to mobilize technical assistance experts and disability employment consultants across the country, and make their expertise more accessible to the autism and small business community. Rather than a "one size fits all" approach, this technical assistance program is based on the individual needs, goals and financial resources of each small business. Our aim is to replicate best practices for small business employers in order to increase employment of people with autism.

Last year, Autism Speaks established pilot initiatives in the Midwest Region and in South Florida. The Small Business Accelerator Programs features an 8-session curriculum that focuses on different topics and exercises designed to help participants define the steps they need to take in order to build sustainable jobs and plan for long-term success. A crucial goal for the project was to build a strong, regional community of experts who can continue to share knowledge and help others long after the pilot project concluded.

We learned from successful business models that community support is critical to getting the word out about a business. Marketing style also played an impact on success. Businesses marketing the quality and usefulness of their product—as opposed to marketing the fact that the staff are people with autism—proved to have more successful campaigns. We also learned that staff and/or business owners with autism must find meaning in the tasks involved in order to put in the hard work required for sustained success.

Due to the overwhelmingly positive response to the Small Business Accelerator pilot programs, Autism Speaks will fund additional grants to technical assistance experts or disability employment consultants in three new regions in 2016. The program seeks to build capacity and scalability by addressing the significant knowledge gap that prevents more small businesses and entrepreneurs from starting their own businesses, or developing existing businesses, that employ individuals with autism; build an engaged network of subject-matter experts who can provide technical assistance and support for other small businesses around the country; and provide opportunities for interaction of entrepreneurs and build a community of businesses who serve as models and inspirations to others.

Looking Forward

Spreading awareness about the benefits of hiring individuals with autism and the low cost of providing accommodations is crucial. To do this, strong, regional and local communities of experts who can continue to share promising employment practices and sustainable business models that support the hiring of individuals with autism and other disabilities must be built throughout the country.

Business associations, local chambers of commerce, local industry associations or other employer networks are in a powerful position to help their small business members learn about best practices and take steps toward hiring qualified individuals, specifically at the local level. Business associations can help develop disability inclusion initiatives that are region or locale specific and engage their members in this important workforce development issue. Business associations, in partnerships with schools and employment service providers, can perform a range of activities to promote hiring, such as formal job placement programs and business education events.

Leveraging small businesses as a key partner in workforce development strategies could better prepare youth with autism for employment and provide employers with a pipeline of skilled workers. National, state, and local workforce development strategies should collaborate with small businesses to increase access to work-based learning and work experience for secondary school students to raise employment and independent living aspirations of youth with autism and their families while demonstrating to local employers the value individuals with autism bring to the workforce.

A job is more than the key to independence enjoyed by most members of our society; it is in large part the way we as Americans identify ourselves. Individuals living with autism deserve the opportunity to contribute as productive workers and actively improve their quality of life. And businesses today have a tremendous opportunity to access a largely untapped labor pool of qualified job candidates who happen to have an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.

Autism Speaks remains dedicated to connecting individuals with autism to employment opportunities and looks forward to the small business community utilizing this untapped, valuable, and dedicated workforce.

Terri Hogan Testimony

Good Morning Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velazquez and members of the committee. I am Terri Hogan speaking on behalf of Contemporary Cabinetry East, located in Cincinnati, Ohio. My title is CEO and Chairman and we are a certified NWBOC (woman owned business). We began as a very small family business in 1984. My husband and I purchased the company from the family in 2003 and have grown the business steadily and today employ 70 individuals. My husband, Paul and I volunteer in the special needs community and are raising our 17 year old son, Bayley, who has autism. We understand the concern of families who are facing transition into adulthood and those who have already reached this stage. "What happens now" is a question frequently asked. How can our children become independent members of the community? Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you to discuss inclusion in the small business workplace. We need to educate others so they begin to take the "dis" out of disabilities and replace it with "abilities". We also need to make small businesses aware of the huge untapped resource that is people with diverse abilities. Hiring people who are physically, genetically or cognitively diverse is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.

EMBRACE AND CREATE AN INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

I began the venture and thought process of hiring individuals with "special abilities" over a year ago. This began with contacting different agencies, giving them tours of our facility and lots of discussion and decisions. I met with agencies with employment programs such as Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled, or LADD, for which I am on the board of directors, who is helping to lead a pilot inclusion initiative for small businesses for people with disabilities in Cincinnati with the local Chamber of Commerce and Starfire and their Director, Tim Vogt. After the tour with Tim, he immediately thought of "Mike" who made the trip to be here with me today. Once we went through the interview and hiring process, I planned a meeting with our current employees in preparation of Mike's first day. It was very important to me to stress to everyone that Mike is just like all of us, he has abilities and talents and he will be given regular tasks. They listened. I

have attached to my written testimonial, many quotes and stories from various employees regarding Mike. Mike has raised morale, brought community awareness, caused others to have broader perspectives and has developed many friends at CCE. For the business, Mike has helped to develop a healthier "bottom line"; everyone works harder because of the example he sets. To quote from a story in the Huffington Post, "winning at workplace diversity is not easy, but it is worth it". You may ask, "What did you need to do to make this a success story"? First I will say we have a great company with talented and good employees. Leadership is important as well; talking with everyone ahead of time. There is also a "job coach" that stays on the job with the employee until that person can fade away. This person is paid by the agency that referred the employee. Below is a brief outline of steps that are important to take to help with your success stories:

- Orientation for the new employee. Work with the "job coach" regarding special accommodations needed. This would also include working closely with your local agencies involved. Mike had a job coach for a few months and after that he became very self-sufficient.
- If needed and available have on-site or on the job training.
- Talk to current employees about diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Engage with the new employees and encourage current employees to interact as well (include at breaks and during lunch, ask what the new employee's interests might be).
- Some employers might be able to offer flexible working hours, design schedules that might work better for an employee to succeed; some call it "flexi-time". Some may need to work during a "quiet" time to accomplish more.
- Know that most individuals with disabilities stay in the job longer. 62% of these employees remained in the same job for three or more years. This represents a 48% lower turnover rate than those who do not have disabilities.
- A quote from Employment First Employment Fact Sheet; "when businesses identify the strengths of employees with disabilities, then put them in jobs that match their skills, those employees turn out to be faithful, low turnover,

hard-working employees". These special employees come to work on time and when scheduled and have lower sick time off. They are reliable, flexible to demands and 90% of individuals with disabilities performed equal to better than nondisabled individuals.

HOW TO BE PRO-ACTIVE AND WHAT IS PROVEN TO WORK

Integrating students into the labor market early is a key determinant of successful post-school employment outcomes for all young adults, but even more for those with disabilities. There needs to be a combination of academics, career and technical education (formally vocational training), and work experience in a related field to result in successful employment for students with disabilities. It would also be wise to have educators tour facilities, stores, restaurants etc. to learn what is available in the workforce, thus learn what skills are needed to teach. Teaching students as young as middle school certain life and vocational skills can be very beneficial. Employers value work-based learning specifically when the skills a student learns are needed in the workplace. Work-based learning opportunities, such as internships and job-shadowing promote efficient recruitment practices and help develop the pipeline of skilled and qualified workers. Below are several resources, helpful hints and web-sites that would be beneficial to employers:

- Partner with local schools to provide career exploration and work with educators so they learn skills needed to teach. We own a manufacturing company and find it very difficult to hire individuals that have strong skills since schools have basically taken vocational training out of the curriculum.
- The Job Accommodation Network provides free technical assistance services to employers, including one- on- one consultation about all aspects of job accommodations for employees with disabilities. VisitJAN.org or contact JAN Consultant directly at 800-526-7234.
- ADD Us In is a U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEO) initiative designed to identify and develop strategies to increase the capacity of the small business community to hire individuals with disabilities. For contacts and resources, see ADD Us in Grantees.

- The Employer Assistance and Resource Network provides online, phone and individualized technical assistance, consultation, and customized training on a broad range of disability and inclusion topics to meet employers' recruitment and hiring needs. For more information, see AskEARN.org or contact 855-275-3276.

What do I expect Congress to do?

Leave here today with a better understanding of how inclusion in the workplace adds to the diversity of the workplace environment and may lead to a more diverse customer base. The positive effect these individuals have on lifting the morale of other employees and set "role model" work ethic examples. Begin career and technical education in middle and high schools. Take the "dis" out of disability and focus on ones "abilities".

Here is a quote I recently read and feel it is applicable to this discussion; "we become like our friends. The people we surround ourselves with either raise or lower our standards". Mike has raised everyone's standards at Contemporary Cabinetry East and hiring Mike was the best business decision I have ever made.

Thank you for your time and attention. Let's get to work!!

David M. Ooten & Kathy Ames-Ooten
41 Worthington Ave.
Wyoming, Ohio 45215

December 15, 2015

Terri,

I could not let the end of year pass without sincerely thanking you for the opportunity you have provided our son Mike. It is one thing to be compassionate for people of difference but to own a business and provide a chance and opportunity for someone like Mike is simply refreshing. To step up and define inclusion as part of your business and operating culture is courageous, and a powerful model for others to witness.

We recognize that every employee must add value and hopefully Mike has done that in more than just his productivity. His pure joy with himself every day as he gets up and packs his lunch and each week when he deposits his check is priceless.

Over the years Mike has taught us a lot. We experience his spirit often and it is clear to us that all he has ever wanted, as anyone with difference, is to be "included". Mike truly savors his role as contributing member of society, both in his employment at CCE and his volunteer role with the facilities team at Crossroads.

We are truly humbled and grateful for all that Mike has been able to experience as an employee of your company. A mere thank you seems so insufficient, but we truly wanted to extend a sincere thank you for taking a risk on Mike and blessing him with such an incredible gift that he is very proud of.

Kathy and I wish you and your family a peaceful, joyous, and blessed Christmas season.

Sincerely,

David Ooten Kathy Ames-Ooten

Terri,

Here is what I have received so far:

"Working alongside someone with special needs has shown me that they can do any task that anyone else would normally do. Helping and teaching someone with special needs to be more independent by working with them is so rewarding. To actually make a positive difference in the life of a person is a feeling that is priceless." --- Steve Schmidt (Finish Dept.)

"Mike is polite and hardworking. He's always here and never misses a day. He's a fun guy to work with. He does everything you ask of him. We consider Mike just one of the guys. When he's finished with one job you give him, he's always looking for what to do next. He has a great attitude. If everyone else had Mike's attitude, then CCE would be great. He takes pride in what he works on. He keeps the day fun with an air guitar solo every once in awhile." --- John Rogers (Building Dept.)

"Mike has been with us for a year and has fit in very well. He has a professional and courteous disposition with an awesome upbeat attitude to boot! This something that everyone else picks up on. Over time, he has worked more independently on projects without the need for direct supervision. He seems to enjoy his workday and the time he spends at CCE. He promotes a level of camaraderie by including others in things like volunteer projects, CD exchanges, or even sharing a snack at lunchtime." --- Alex Jordan (Plant Manager)

"Mike Ames has been a great addition to the crew here at CCE. Three days a week, we have a positive, hardworking, and understanding team member that really helps the flow in the shop. In addition to that, he has become a good friend to me and others here. Mike and I have also found that we like a lot of the same music, and I really enjoy his enthusiasm to ROCK! If Mike notices I'm having a bad day he won't hesitate to come over and offer a kind word in addition to some helpful advice. His positive attitude and kind nature make me look forward to the days Mike puts in at the shop. He really is just "one of the guys", and I'm glad that I've found a friend in Mike." --- Will Bacon (Machine Operator)

I should have something from Brent tomorrow. He was working all day in back helping pack the casework for McLaughlin. Mike was helping him all day.

Alex Jordan

Contemporary Cabinetry East

(513) 791-9115 office

RE: Good Morning

From:	"Ooten, David" <ooten.dm@pg.com>
To:	TERRI HOGAN
Subject:	RE: Good Morning
Date:	May 11, 2016 3:45 PM
Attachments:	image005.jpg image006.png Terri Christmas 2015.doc

Terri,

Fantastic, thank you for the update. This is the Christmas note (attached).

And below is the nomination note I wrote for the 2016 Neighborhood Summit Community Awards.

Regards,
David

" Contemporary Cabinetry East has demonstrated its commitment to providing opportunities for individuals of special needs through an environment of training, inclusion, and potential job opportunities. This family owned business embraces a culture of inclusion by its employees which enables people of difference to be productive and contributing members of society and fosters a sense of pride and being "part of" to all of its employees. CCE has provided a work place that has enabled my son Mike to grow and learn new skills, all with patience, love, and tolerance for his needs. The entire staff at CCE welcomes Mike in a way that makes him feel valued and just "one of the guys/gals". This was recently demonstrated in conversation with Mike when he commented how much he likes his guys at CCE. Being part of a community happens in our neighborhoods, our families, our work places, etc. and I am extremely impressed by the willingness and open mindedness of CCE to risk the unknown and strengthen our greater Cincinnati community as a whole by providing these valuable opportunities for those with special needs. CCE is an example of leadership in our community and is definitely making a difference in the lives of people in our community."

Global Process Development Facility GMDSO Passion. Mastery. Partnership

David M. Ooten
Principal Engineer
MDS (Material Development & Supply)

The Procter & Gamble Company
GPDF - Global Process Development Facility
5348 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45217
Email: ooten.dm@pg.com
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Employee Statement - Mike Ames

From:	ALEX JORDAN <alexj.cce@fuse.net>
To:	'TERRI HOGAN'
Subject:	Employee Statement - Mike Ames
Date:	May 11, 2016 4:41 PM
Attachments:	image001.gif

Terri,

Here is Brent's statement:

" My journey with Mike Ames began 3 months ago when I started at my new company (CCE). I was assigned to the edgebander and Mike was my co-worker on the machine. Mike is my first extended exposure to Down Syndrome. I'll be honest, I entered our work relationship with a certain amount of trepidation. There were a lot of unknowns for me about what I was getting into. But at the same time, I was also excited about the opportunity presented to me. In my limited experience with Down Syndrome, I have always found those individuals to be gentle with incredibly big, loving hearts, and Mike is no exception. My ignorance is being erased, and my concerns have dissipated. I have to say that being around Mike is one of the greatest joys I take from my job. His kindness and willingness to help anyone who asks is admirable, and he has earned my respect and affection. Mike teaches me everyday how to love more. His outlook reminds me to appreciate the things and people in my life. His presence somehow frees me so I can be the "me" that sometimes I'm afraid to be. I'm a happier person because of my friend Mikey." --- Brent Arrowsmith (Co-worker)

Alex Jordan

Contemporary Cabinetry East

(513) 791-9115 office

(513) 791-8438 fax

ISSUE BRIEF: ABLE to Work Act (S.2702/H.R.4795)

egislative Request

ase cosponsor the bipartisan *ABLE to Work Act* to increase the amount of yearly assets that an employed beneficiary nay save in an ABLE account by contacting:

- Senate: Natasha Hickman with Sen. Burr at Natasha_Hickman@burr.senate.gov or (202) 224-3154
- House: Jennifer Debes with Rep. Crenshaw at Jennifer.Debes@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-2501

alking Points – ABLE to Work Act

- Twice as many Americans with disabilities live in poverty compared to those without disabilities (over 28 % compared to 12.4%), and less than 30 % of working-age Americans with disabilities participate in the workforce[1]
- In order to encourage work and self-sufficiency as well as help keep disabled individuals out of poverty, the *ABLE to Work Act* would allow individuals and their families to save more money in an ABLE account if the beneficiary works and earns income
- The federal *Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act* took nearly a decade to pass and goes a long way towards raising the asset limitation from the $2,000 asset cap to $100,000 so that beneficiaries may save money for qualified disability expenses such as education, health care, job training, transportation and more without jeopardizing their means-tested benefits
- The *ABLE Act* limits annual contributions to an ABLE account to $14,000 (the federal gift tax exclusion). Any additional contribution - even if it is from earned income of the beneficiary - is not permitted without incurring penalties and could jeopardize the ABLE account's tax benefits and federal benefits
- This $14,000 annual contribution cap does little to incentivize employment since it is the aggregate of all contributions to the ABLE account (including earned income), and employed beneficiaries are still unable to contribute to employer-provided retirement accounts, such as 401(k) plans, which could jeopardize their benefits
- Specifically, an ABLE beneficiary who earns income from a job could save up to the Federal Poverty Level, which is currently at $11,770, and when enacted raises the annual contribution limit for employed ABLE beneficiaries to approximately $26,000 (current limit is $14,000)
- Help us bring people with disabilities out of poverty and incentivize them to work by permitting them to save their earnings in an ABLE account
- **TELL PERSONAL STORIES RE: BEING FORCED TO TAKE NON-PAYING OR LOW-PAYING JOBS, WORKING LESS HOURS THAN YOU WANT DUE TO EARNED INCOME LIMITATION**

Background

People with disabilities are living longer, healthier and productive lives, working and contributing to society. Yet these individuals are forced to live in poverty when they have the potential to achieve so much more because they are subject to a $2,000 asset limitation and an extremely low monthly income limitation in order to preserve eligibility for benefits

---

[1] See Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions website, http://www.harkin.senate.gov/documents/pdf/500469b49b364.pdf
Filling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers U.S. Senate Committee on Health, to Economic Self-sufficiency for People with Disabilities
ation, Labor, and Pensions

such as Medicaid and SSI. This asset limitation also means that individuals with disabilities who work are not able to save in retirement and other tax-favored accounts without losing critical benefits.

In December 2014, Congress took a huge step forward by creating Section 529A of the IRS tax code to establish tax-exempt savings accounts, "ABLE accounts", for disability-related expenses that do not count towards this asset cap and, therefore, do not affect eligibility for means-tested programs. The ABLE program was modeled after the popular state-based 529 college savings plans. With 454 cosponsors in the House and Senate, the ABLE Act was the most bipartisan piece of legislation in the 113th Congress. Harnessing the momentum of the bipartisan effort to enact the ABLE Act in 2014, to date, more than 40 states have enacted their own versions of ABLE and many are now in the process of establishing state ABLE programs. ABLE accounts will start to become available in the spring of 2016.

While the ABLE Act is a significant step forward and has been heralded as one of the most important pieces of disability legislation since the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* more than a quarter century ago, it can be improved in many ways. The *ABLE to Work Act* will raise the annual contribution limit for those beneficiaries who work and earn income.

Summary of the Legislation

The *ABLE to Work Act (S. 2702/H.R. 4795)* was introduced in the 114th Congress on March 17, 2016 by Sens. Richard Burr (R-NC) and Casey (D-PA), and Reps. Ander Crenshaw (R-FL), McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Rep. Sessions (R-TX) and Rep. Van Hollen (D-MD). The legislation would amend Section 529A(b)(2)(B) of the federal *ABLE Act* so that an ABLE beneficiary who is employed may contribute, in addition to the current $14,000 (federal gift tax) contribution limit, the lesser of: (i) the amount of actual compensation or (ii) the amount equal to the poverty line for a one-person household (currently $11,770). Therefore, when enacted, an ABLE beneficiary could contribute up to $25,770 to an ABLE account in a year.

There are exceptions to this additional contribution from income. An ABLE beneficiary who already contributes to an employer-based contribution plan would not be able to take advantage of ABLE to Work's increased contribution limit. This is a mechanism to ensure that wealthier individuals who work would not be able to use the *ABLE to Work Act* as a tax shelter.

The *ABLE to Work Act* would also allow ABLE beneficiaries to qualify for the Saver's Credit, an existing federal tax credit that low and middle-income individuals can currently claim when they make contributions to a retirement account. This bill would extend this credit to ABLE accounts, providing an ABLE beneficiary with a savings match of as much as $1,000 ($2,000 if married), depending on how much they contribute to their ABLE account and their earnings.

Frequently Asked Questions about the ABLE to Work Act

Why is the increased contribution limit tied to the Federal Poverty Level?

The Federal Poverty Level is a readily available number that is regularly adjusted by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Since so many individuals with disabilities are impoverished, the legislative ask to cosponsor this bill so that people with disabilities can save up to the poverty line is very compelling. Politically, there had to be a maximum number so that the score of the bill will be tangible and so that disabled individuals with high-paying jobs will not be able to use ABLE accounts as a tax shelter.

How does the ABLE to Work Act relate to the other recently proposed ABLE amendments? Does NDSS support the other ABLE bills?

ABLE to Work Act was introduced at the same time as two other ABLE amendments, the *ABLE Financial Planning Act* and the *ABLE Age Adjustment Act*. All three bills are supported by the original six ABLE legislative champions.

The *ABLE Financial Planning Act (H.R. 4794/S. 2703)* will enable ABLE beneficiaries to roll over regular 529 accounts to 529A (ABLE) accounts up to the annual maximum contribution limit ($14,000), and will also allow for a reverse-rollover if the beneficiary ceases to be disabled. This bill is particularly helpful for families who set up 529 accounts before receiving a child's diagnosis, or for teenagers who incur life-changing events that render them unable to go to college and use their 529 funds for their original purpose.

The *ABLE Age Adjustment Act (H.R. 4813/S. 2704)* will raise the age of onset of disability from 26 to 46, which is halfway to retirement age. This will enable individuals who become disabled later in life to take advantage of the benefits of ABLE accounts.

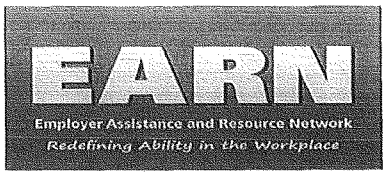
NDSS supports all three bills. However, our top priority is the *ABLE to Work Act* because we believe it will have the most impact on the Down syndrome community and it advances our employment campaign, #DSWORKS™. Since Down syndrome is diagnosed at or before birth and is a lifelong condition, the other two bills are not as applicable to our population. NDSS will be advocating for all three bills on behalf of our cross-disability partners who have designated them as priorities, but the Buddy Walk ® on Washington meetings should focus on the *ABLE to Work Act*.

Does the ABLE to Work Act increase the Social Security earned income limitation? Will wages that a beneficiary puts into an ABLE account be counted by the Social Security Administration as "earned income," or will they be exempt from this designation?

The *ABLE to Work Act* does not increase the monthly-earned income limitation (NDSS will be working to accomplish this goal in the future but it will be through a more complicated legislative initiative). The wages put into an ABLE account will likely still be counted by the Social Security Administration as "earned income" for the first month they are deposited; after the first month, they simply become assets in the ABLE account.

How does the ABLE to Work Act incentivize employment?

Although the *ABLE to Work Act* does not address the income limitation issue, it provides beneficiaries with a mechanism to save more of their earnings. Many beneficiaries who have been reluctant to take a paid employment position or who have declined raises or extra hours will now have an expanded savings vehicle in which they can accumulate their wages. Beneficiaries will be able to weigh the additional income they can earn and save against their monthly Social Security check, which may decrease as income rises.



Small Business Disability Inclusion Fact Sheet

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and play a critical role in job creation and broad-based economic growth. According to the Small Business Administration, small businesses create 65 percent of net new jobs. Depending on the industry, a small business may be defined by the number of employees, receipts, or assets.

Having enough financial and human capital are major issues facing small business. How can businesses recruit key talent with limited time and resources? One practical approach is tapping into underutilized recruitment resources to attract new and emerging talent inclusive of individuals with disabilities. Another hiring strategy is offering internships, which may be more affordable than hiring permanent employees. By hiring interns, businesses can capitalize on new talent, creative ideas, enthusiasm, and cutting edge knowledge for their workplaces. Recruiting diverse candidates may be a new experience; however, it is business as usual if the focus is on the fit between the position and the candidate's qualifications.

Technical assistance is available for small businesses on practical business strategies and solutions to make their workplaces more accessible and welcoming to diverse customers and employees. The following resources provide information on accessibility, accommodations, community resources, legal issues, recruitment and shared best practices.

Add Us In Initiative

Add Us In is a U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) initiative designed to identify and develop strategies to increase the capacity of the small business community to hire individuals with disabilities. For contacts and resources, see Add Us In Grantees.

Job Accommodation Network

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides free technical assistance services to employers, including one-on-one consultation about all aspects of job accommodations for employees with disabilities. For more information, visit AskJAN.org or contact a JAN Consultant directly at 800-526-7234 (Voice) or (877) 781-9403 (TTY).

Employer Assistance and Resource Network

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network (EARN) provides online, phone, and individualized technical assistance, consultation, and customized training on a broad range of disability and inclusion topics to meet employers' recruitment and hiring needs. For more information, see AskEARN.org or contact a TA Specialist at 855-275-3276 (Voice/TTY).

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Available through state vocational rehabilitation and veteran organizations, employers may be reimbursed for a portion of a new employee's salary, fees associated with training, support services (uniforms, tools, bus passes, etc.), and any needed accommodations for a specific duration of time. For more information, contact the National Employment Team for a Business Relations Specialist in your area. If you are interested in hiring veterans with disabilities, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

WOTC offers a benefit to employers for hiring veterans based on wages paid to the employee, including 25% of qualified first-year wages for those employed at least 120 hours but fewer than 400 hours, and 40% for those employed 400 hours or more. Section 261 of the Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, "Returning Heroes and Wounded Warriors", amends and expands the definition of WOTC's veteran target groups and applies to employees who

started work the day after its enactment on November 22, 2011, and before January 1, 2013. The Vow to Hire Heroes Act includes the following provisions:

- ✓ Extends the current target group for veterans with a service-connected disability with the same qualified wages cap ($12,000) and maximum tax credit ($4,800).
- ✓ Extends the current target group for veterans with a service-connected disability unemployed for at least six months with the qualified wages cap increased to $24,000 and the maximum tax credit increased to $9,600.
- ✓ Includes veterans unemployed for at least four weeks with a qualified wages cap of $6,000 and maximum tax credit of $2,400.
- ✓ Includes veterans unemployed for at least six months with qualified wages cap of $14,000 and maximum tax credit of $5,600.

Additional Tax Credits and Deductions

Businesses accommodating people with disabilities may qualify for some of the following tax credits and deductions.

✓ **Small Business Tax Credit: Section 44 of the Internal Revenue Code**

Also known as the Disabled Access Credit, a business with less than $1 million in gross receipts or 30 or fewer full-time employees is eligible for an annual tax credit for becoming accessible to people with disabilities. Tax credits can be used for:

- Sign language interpreters for employees or customers who have hearing impairments and readers for employees or customers with visual impairments.
- The purchase of adaptive equipment or the modification of equipment.
- Printed materials in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, audio tape, large print).
- The removal of architectural barriers in buildings or vehicles.

✓ **Architectural and Transportation Tax Deduction: Section 190 of Internal Revenue Code**

The Architectural Barrier Removal Tax Deduction encourages businesses of any size to remove architectural and transportation barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Businesses may claim a deduction of up to $15,000 a year for qualified expenses for items that normally must be capitalized. Businesses claim the deduction by listing it as a separate expense on their income tax return. Examples of deductions include:

- Providing accessible parking spaces, ramps and curb cuts.
- Making telephones, water fountains and restrooms accessible to persons using wheelchairs.
- Making walkways and paths of travel accessible (e.g. 32 inch doorways when open at a 90 degree angle, 36-48 inch wide hallways or sidewalks free of obstruction).
- Providing accessible entrances to buildings (e.g. automatic doors, proper door weights, etc.).

These two incentives can be used together by eligible businesses if the expenditures qualify under both Sections 44 and 190. Additional information may be found at accessibility and barrier removal.

Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Businesses (elaws)

The elaws Advisors, developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, assist employers and employees in understanding several Federal employment laws, including disability nondiscrimination statutes.

ADA Resources

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance, and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), tailored to meet the needs of business at local, regional, and national levels. For additional information, see the Small Business Primer, employer resources, or contact an Information Specialist at 800-949-4232 (Voice/TTY).

ODEP Office of Disability Employment Policy

The National Technical Assistance, Policy, and Research Center for Employers on Employment of People with Disabilities is funded by a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy to Cornell University. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Labor. Nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply the endorsement of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Manufacturers and Employees with Autism- The Opportunity

Over the next decade, nearly 3.5 million manufacturing jobs likely need to be filled. Manufacturing executives report a significant gap in their ability to find talent with required skills. More troubling, the skills gap is expected to grow substantially over the next decade.

Autism as (Part of) the Solution

- **500,000 teens with autism** will into enter adulthood – and the labor market – over the next decade. As many as 85-90% of adults with autism are unemployed or badly underemployed below their capabilities.
- **Hiring people with autism can make companies more successful.** Many businesses and companies have found this to be true as employees with autism, when aligned with their talents and interests, are productive, loyal and have fewer work place accidents than employees without disabilities.
- **Competitive Advantage of Hiring People with Disabilities (Including Autism)**
  - Turnover rates are lower than people without disabilities
  - Greater productivity and safety
  - Improvements in innovation, problem solving abilities, ability to compete in all markets and serve diverse consumers
  - Establishes positive company image and reputation, increases customer satisfaction
  - Strengths of individuals with autism include strong memory of details, ability to focus, visual skills, unique problem solving ability, consistency on repetitive tasks, honesty and loyalty.

Small Businesses need a pipeline of talented workers

Integrating students into the labor market early is a key determinant of successful post-school employment outcomes, for all students, even more so for students with disabilities. A combination of academics, career and technical education (CTE), and work experience in a related field, consistently result in employment for students with disabilities.[1] Increased access to CTE programs, especially work-based or on-the-job learning, can help address the unmet needs of the small business community, manufacturing industry and individuals with autism transitioning into adulthood as a pathway to the skills needed for employment and independent living.

What is Proven to Work

Work-based Learning

Transitioning youth with disabilities into the labor force early is a key determinant for successful employment. An abundance of research over the last three decades confirms that- youth with disabilities who have work experiences during their secondary school years are more likely to be successfully employed. In addition, these early work experiences are beneficial to businesses.[2]

Employers value work-based learning because the competencies acquired are those that are specifically needed in the workplace. Work-based learning opportunities, such as internships and job-shadowing, promote efficient recruitment practices and helps develop the pipeline of skilled and qualified workers.

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[1] Shandra & Hogan, 2008

[2] Goodman, Nanette, and Michael Morris. "Creating Change with Incremental Steps: Enhancing Opportunities for Early Work Experience: Report."*ResearchGate*. Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, Jan. 2013.

Research shows that employers who have internships for people with disabilities are 4.5 times more likely to hire a person with a disability than those who do not.[3]

These work experiences while in secondary school increases motivation to work toward a career and provides greater understanding of the skills needed to succeed at job tasks. The opportunities also provide young people with a better understanding of career options and disabilities related work accommodation strategies. In addition, work experiences can demonstrate to employers and community members the value that individuals with disabilities can bring to the workforce. Schools should partner with small business to strengthen and increase accessibility of career and technical education programs, internships, and apprenticeships for secondary school students and ensure that schools are providing support services for students with autism so they can fully participate, gain technical skills, and transition into employment.
****Terri can discuss her need for skilled workers, her partnership with the school to provide career exploration, etc.*

Supported Employment
In addition to early work experience and skill development, with the proper supports and accommodations, individuals with ASD can achieve their fullest potential and independence. Individuals with autism have a strong chance of becoming employed once they have appropriate supports.[4] Rehabilitative services, such as supported employment, cuts the cost compared with providing standard care and results in better outcomes for adults with ASD. Despite the fact that individuals with ASD can be costly to provide vocational rehabilitation services for, adults with ASD have a very strong chance of becoming employed once appropriate measures are in place. [5] Hence, work-based learning opportunities for secondary students, supported employment and similar rehabilitative services are a worthy investments.
*****Terri can discuss her employee needed an aide, then became self-sufficient.*

Communities of Practice
Small businesses serve as an integral player to solving the workforce development needs of many communities. Their unique flexibility allows for innovative approaches to recruiting, training, and employing individuals with diverse abilities. Small businesses require qualified and skilled workers. Schools and employment service providers require employers willing to train and hire workers. Small businesses, schools, community organizations, local workforce development boards, and chambers of commerce can partner to create more opportunities for work experience and employment that is based on local and regional labor market demands. Local partnerships can streamline efficiencies to train young adults with autism for the skills that match the needs of small businesses. Therefore, students and young adults with autism would have multiple career pathways to match their skills and interest to, rather than simply choosing from limited employers willing to hire them.
****Terri can discuss how her community is working together and sharing best-practices/success stories to spread knowledge about hiring workers with disabilities*

Steps Congress Can Take to Cultivate a Pipeline of Skilled Workers for Small Business and Better Prepare Students with Disabilities for Employment

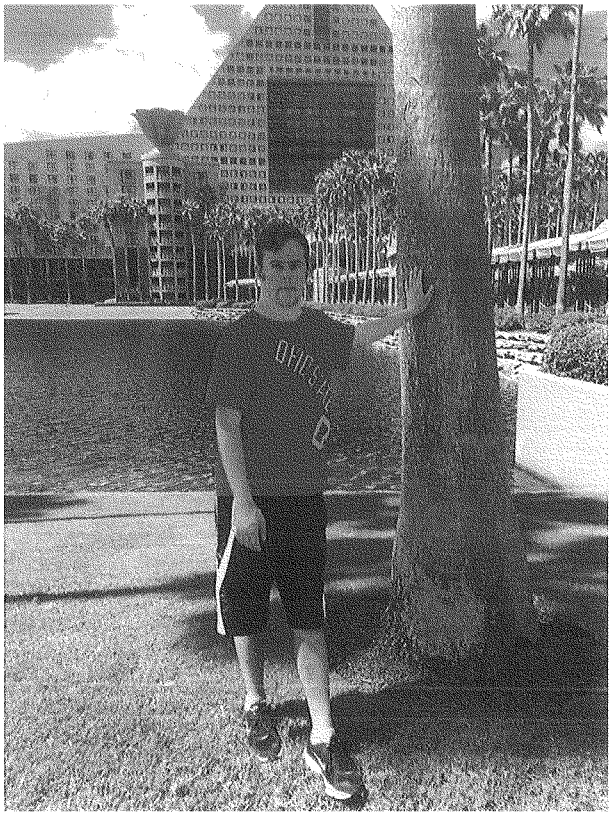
- Start cultivating talent and teaching technical skills early by expanding career readiness programs to serve youth early in middle school.

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[3] Luecking, R., & Fabian, E. S. (2000). Paid internships and employment success for youth in transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 23(2), 205-221
[4] Jacob, Andrew et al. "The Costs and Benefits of Employing an Adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review." Ed. Nouchine Hadjikhani. 2016.
[5] Jacob, Andrew et al. "The Costs and Benefits of Employing an Adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Systematic Review." Ed. Nouchine Hadjikhani. 2016

- Strengthen and increase accessibility of career and technical education programs for secondary school students and ensure that schools are providing support services for students with autism so they can fully participate, gain technical skills, and transition into employment.

- Increase access to work-based learning and work experience for secondary school students to raise employment and independent living aspirations of youth with autism and their families while demonstrating to local employers the value individuals with autism bring to the workforce.





Your launch site: **Oakley**
Arrival time: **7-7:30am** (doors open at 7am)
Check in with your project leader here: **Kids' Club Room 220**
Your project leader: **David Ooten & Mike Ames**
Your project leader's contact info: **ooten.dm@pg.com/5133134148 or 0010hotrod@gmail.com/**
You are connected to your project through: **Ames, Mike**

After you check in with your project leader, head to the Auditorium for a rockin' launch service from 8-8:45am. At 8:45am, we'll head to our projects to do the work from 9am-1pm.

Your project name: **Welcome Home Collaborative**
Project address: **461 Dayton St, Cincinnati, OH 45214**
Project type: **Landscaping**
Notes about your project: **Long pants and closed toe shoes critical!**
When you arrive at the project site, parking instructions: **On the street nearby**

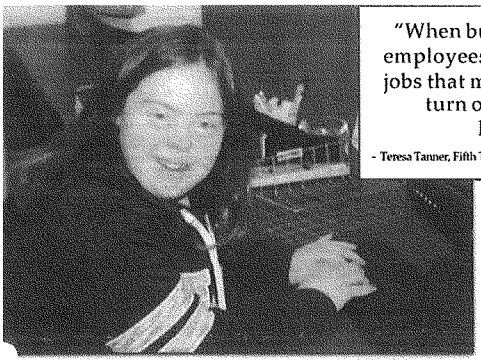
OR JUST SHOW UP 9:00 A.M.

A great way to prepare for the day is to Google the organization you'll be serving and pray for them! So excited to bless our region with you on **Saturday, May 14**!

Questions : DAVID 513-313-4148

EMPLOYMENT FACT SHEET

EMPLOYMENT FIRST is a national movement to assist job seekers with developmental disabilities (DD) to work in competitive, integrated employment. In March 2012, Governor John Kasich signed an Executive Order making community employment a priority for people with developmental disabilities. Since that time, there has been a 16% increase in the number of people with developmental disabilities who are working in the community. Employers recognize that employees with DD are reliable and perform equal to or better than non-disabled employees.



"When businesses identify the strengths of employees with disabilities, then put them in jobs that match their skills, those employees turn out to be faithful, low-turnover, hard-working employees."

- Teresa Tanner, Fifth Third Bank, Executive Vice President, Chief Human Resource Officer

HIRING JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

- Job seekers with developmental disabilities and their families control $2.1 billion ANNUALLY in spending.
- These individuals demonstrate brand loyalty to businesses that hire individuals with disabilities.
- 87 percent of all U.S. adults prefer to spend money at businesses that hire individuals with disabilities.[1]
- Hiring job seekers with DD adds to diversity of the workplace environment and may lead to a more diverse customer base.
- There are over 1.5 million Ohioans who have a disability and they represent 13% of the market.[2]
- Their quality and quantity of work, flexibility to demands, attendance, and safety are equal to those employees who do not have DD.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US:
http://www.ohioemploymentfirst.org/
employmentfirst@dodd.ohio.gov
30 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215
614-466-6612

QUALITIES OF EMPLOYEES WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Stay in jobs longer

- 62% of individuals with disabilities have remained in the same job for three years or more.[1]
- 48% lower turnover rate than those who do not have disabilities.[1]

Come to work on time and when scheduled

- Individuals with disabilities have lower sick time use than those who do not have disabilities.[3]
- 73% of time off expenses are lower for individuals with developmental disabilities.[3]

Are reliable

- Are rated average or above average in work performance, quality and quantity of work, flexibility to demands, attendance, and safety.[1]
- 90% of individuals with disabilities performed equal to or better than nondisabled individuals.[3]

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF HIRING EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Costs of hiring employees with disabilities are comparable

- It will NOT cost more to hire an individual with disabilities.
- Most accommodations (66%) cost less than $500. For every dollar an employer spends for a disability-related accommodation, a company can save $34 in other job-related expenses such as training and recruitment.[4]

Insurance Rates will not increase

- Insurance and workers' compensation rates for the company will not be affected by hiring an individual with a disability.[5]

References: [1]Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). (2014). Employing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. [2]United States Census Bureau. (February 5, 2015). State and county quick facts: Ohio. Retrieved from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39000.html [3]American Training. (December 12, 2012). Elevedata substantiates benefits of hiring people with disabilities for assembly and distribution jobs. Retrieved from http://www.americantraining.com/hiring-people-with-disabilities-for-assembly-distribution-jobs/ [4]AskJan.org. Retrieved from http://askjan.org/BusinessCase/ [5]Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities. Retrieved from http://www.ood.ohio.gov/Employers/EmployerResources [6]The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved from http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/accommodation.html

ULTRA TESTING

May 19th 2016

House Committee on Small Business Hearing

Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All

Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez, Members of the Committee. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support small businesses, and for exploring the role of small businesses in creating job opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum.

My name is Rajesh Anandan. I'm one of the founders of ULTRA Testing, a company I started three years ago with my co-founder Art Shectman, whom I've known since we were roommates in college at MIT.

Art spent the past twenty years being a serial entrepreneur, building technology services ventures. I spent a decade in technology and corporate strategy, and another decade scaling up social ventures. Together, we started a company that we believe will revolutionize the software testing industry. More importantly, we're building a company that we hope will prove the tremendous economic potential to be unlocked by employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

David, whom you just saw in the video (see www.DifferentBetter.us) is one of our team members at ULTRA. He graduated in 2001 with a degree in Computer Science, and

was eager to start his career. He applied and interviewed for dozens of positions but unfortunately was not able to find a job in his field or any field. Eager to work, David started volunteering at a local computer repair shop refurbishing used computers, and helping friends and family members fix their computer problems. For over a decade, David tried to find paid work, without success. Then in late 2014, he applied for a part time software tester position at ULTRA. He successfully completed our rigorous recruitment process, and within one month after starting work, he was working on billable client projects, generating an income for himself, revenue for ULTRA, and value for our clients. Within a year, based on the consistently excellent results David produced, we offered him a full time position at ULTRA. Today, thanks to his heightened logical reasoning and pattern recognition abilities, his innate curiosity about technology, his thirst to learn and improve, his willingness to persevere through challenging tasks and projects, and his commitment to work hard and do his best every day, David is one of the best software testers we have on our team at ULTRA.

There are 3.5 million Americans on the Autism Spectrum. By some estimates, one third have graduated high school and been admitted to college. Many individuals on the Autism Spectrum, like David, are extremely capable and willing to work hard, and would make a fantastic addition to any team or organization. And yet, over 80% of this community are not employed.

When my co-founder Art and I founded ULTRA three years ago, we set out to unlock the economic potential of this tremendous talent pool, and prove that we could build a technology services company that brought excellence to our industry by employing a workforce of people with different abilities. Today, we have team members working in 13 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the Autism Spectrum, and 100% of whom believe our differences make us better. Thanks to our exceptional team, ULTRA has tripled revenues two years in a row, achieved profitability, repeatedly converted new clients into recurring business, and consistently outperformed the competition. Time and again, our team has been able to discover significantly more bugs in our clients' websites, mobile applications and enterprise platforms. Every bug, or mistake in the software, that we find, saves our clients time and money and helps protect their reputation. On a typical day, our team can extend a client's bug detection rate by over 20%, like when we tested the Webby Awards website. On a good day, we can extend a client's bug detection rates by over 50%, like when we won a project away from IBM and redid their work for a Fortune 100 financial services company.

In order to achieve these results, we did not use a single dollar of philanthropic or government support. Instead, we developed an entirely new operational model for running a business:

- Given high unemployment and challenges with unscripted social interactions common among individuals on the Autism Spectrum, we designed a recruiting process that doesn't rely on resumes or interviews. By utilizing tests, games, and

simulations, we are able to build an accurate model of a job applicant's cognitive abilities and character traits.

- Since unspoken social norms and office politics can cause anxiety, we developed specialized communication tools to facilitate efficient interactions among colleagues and promote transparency, including corporate Communication Rules that explicitly define the "unwritten rules" common in any workplace.
- To minimize the stress of commuting to work and being in a noisy office for our team, and to maximize the chance of employing the best talent for the company, we built a fully remote company leveraging common technologies like Google Hangouts for video interactions and Slack for real-time collaboration.
- To facilitate open communication and ensure team wellbeing among our remote workforce, we adopted open source management practices including a daily happiness meter and weekly feedback survey.

Today, thanks to widely available technologies and tools that enable data-driven hiring, digital-first communication and remote team management, any business, small or large, can leverage the talents of individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Our experience at ULTRA has proven that by doing so, companies can not only gain highly capable employees, but can also achieve consistently superior results.

The promotion of successful case studies, like that of ULTRA, can aid efforts to encourage other small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Such

efforts could also benefit from government policies which clearly provide a business advantage such as facilitating new revenue opportunities or mitigating upfront costs and risks. E.g.:

- Large federal contractors are subject to Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act which includes a goal of 7% of a contractor's workforce being individuals with disabilities. This goal does little to support small businesses who are not likely to be government contractors (but could serve as subcontractors to large companies who hold government contracts) and yet are more likely than large companies to take innovative and proactive approaches to employing individuals with disabilities. A change in policy which allows a sub-contractor's employees to count towards a contractor's 7% goal could catalyze a new ecosystem of small businesses employing individuals with disabilities and partnering with large companies that are government contractors.
- Many small businesses may be hesitant to recruit individuals with disabilities due to a candidate's lack of work experience and/or a company's lack of understanding of the benefits and risks involved. While the promotion of successful case studies can help address some of these concerns, case studies alone are unlikely to shift small businesses' perceived risk of hiring someone with a disability. Government funding to cover the cost of the first several months (e.g. 6 months) of employment for an individual with a disability could greatly reduce the perceived risk of doing so. Which in turn could greatly increase the likelihood of small businesses proactively employing individuals with disabilities.

ULTRA has proven that employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum can be a source of sustainable competitive advantage. During the past three years, we have developed an entirely new operational model for running a business, one that has allowed our diverse workforce to function effectively, provide a high quality service to clients, and consistently outperform the competition. We hope to build on our learnings and accelerate the company's growth, and over the next three years, be widely regarded as the best software testing company in the U.S. and become the largest employer of individuals on the Autism Spectrum in the world.

We hope the results we have and will achieve will inspire many more small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum and tap into an incredibly capable and diverse talent pool right here in the U.S.

Thank you.

Rajesh Anandan

Co-founder, ULTRA Testing

ULTRA TESTING

ATTACHMENT

May 19th, 2016

The Honorable Steve Chabot
Chairman
Committee on Small Business
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nydia Velázquez
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Chabot and Ranking Member Velázquez:

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to support small businesses, and for exploring the role of small businesses in creating job opportunities for people on the Autism Spectrum.

As clients, investors and board members of ULTRA Testing, a high quality software testing company based in New York with employees working in 13 states across the U.S., 75% of whom are on the Autism Spectrum, we have seen first hand the tremendous economic potential to be unlocked by employing individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

The rapid growth achieved by ULTRA as a result of its innovative business model and the superior results delivered for clients by ULTRA's exceptional testing teams are indicative of what is possible when individuals on the Autism Spectrum are empowered to use their talents. We hope that ULTRA's commercial success will inspire more small businesses to employ individuals on the Autism Spectrum and tap into a capable and diverse talent pool right here in the U.S.

Thank you again for your continued leadership.

Ameeth Sankaran, Partner, Camden Partners and 2M Companies
Andrew Essex, CEO, Tribeca Enterprises
Brad Banks, CEO Athena Capital Research
Brian Fino, CEO, Fino Consulting
Brian Jacobs, Co-founder and Managing Partner, Emergence Capital Partners
Bruce Kratz, VP Product Development, Sparta Systems
Camilo Cepeda, CMO Samsung Brazil
David-Michel Davies, CEO, Webby Media Group

Edwin Adlerman, private investor
Gary Colen, CEO, AMP Agency
George Eid, CEO, Area17
Jayne Schrantz, private investor
Marcia Scheiner, Founder and President, ASTEP
Meena Srinivasan, Former VP and Treasurer, Fitbit
Rafi Musher, Founder and CEO, Stax Inc
Rajan Anandan, Managing Director, Google South East Asia and India
Richard Guest, President of North American Operations, Tribal Worldwide
Robert Shectman, private investor
Russ Hagey, Senior Partner and Worldwide Chief Talent Officer, Bain & Company
Susie Nam, COO, Droga5

Testimony of

Joe Steffy, Owner of Poppin Joe's™ Gourmet Kettle Korn

Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All

Before the Small Business Committee

United States House of Representatives

May 19, 2016

My Name is Joe Steffy, I am 30 years old and I own Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn. I was born with Down Syndrome and later diagnosed with Autism. When I was in school, my professional reports said I had an IQ of 32 with profound intellectual disabilities. These reports said that my receptive and expressive language was at a 3 year old level, and that I had minimal basic academic skills.

As I grew, my parents saw that I liked to do things independently, I loved being active with other people and spending time with family and friends. They recognized that I had a very good memory for detail, and could follow through with activities that are part of a regular routine. I was blessed with many community opportunities and became a very strong swimmer. This led to being able to work at the community pool. I enjoyed riding horseback at a local stable and began to volunteer there to work with the horses. Soon I worked in exchange for riding.

In high school, my IEP (Individualized Education Plan) team began to plan for my transition into adulthood. The team had very low expectations. The worst disability there is that of low expectations. They said I would never hold a job, that I had no attention span, could not focus, would need to live in a group home and go to a sheltered workshop. My parents disagreed. They knew I was capable of working and that I learned by watching. They also knew I would do exactly what I saw done, so teaching me the right way to do things would be important. I am happiest when I am busy and my parents knew this. I would work, they said.

While on a trip, my Dad saw a man popping Kettle korn that caught his attention. He asked many questions about the process of the man, and learned that Kettle Korn is an old German way of popping popcorn with sugar. When you add the sugar and secret ingredients to the popcorn and vegetable oil in the hot kettle, the sugar breaks down into a liquid. As the popcorn pops it comes up through the sugar and gives the kernels a sugar coating. While popping, the kettle is 500 degrees so it is important that it is constantly stirred. As you stir the popped kernels, it comingles. Once it is all popped, it is dumped out onto the screening table where it cools.

My Dad came away excited about the possibilities to use this to build on my strengths. This was a way for me to prove that I could work. We began my work trial in October of 2000. The goal was to see if I could work. We popped on weekends at local grocery

stores and I showed Dad I could stay on task for up to 6 hours. In the work trial, Dad saw that I could learn the repetition of the production process. I could pop, and I could bag, both key parts of popping Kettle Korn.

My parents decided this looked like very promising work for me. They attended **a Partners in Policymaking class** in Kansas that David Hammis presented at. They learned that I and others with significant disabilities could OWN their own business. The key to making Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn came true was having a business plan, doing the work trial to prove I could work. **First Steps** helped Mom set up the business plan, and the **Kansas Department for Development Disabilities** provided me with a new business startup grant to purchase new equipment. My start up team included **Social Security**, which offers a program called PASS (The plan for achieving self-support) which supported my business goals and provided cash set aside for my monthly cash flow. My parents also worked with **Vocational Rehab** to purchase a computer and laser printer for my business. They submitted my business plan to open Poppin Joes Kettle Korn to each of these team members. My Team was then able to provide me the start-up supports I needed to become the sole proprietor of Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn in April of 2005.

I offer five products in my business. Cinnamon Kettle Korn, Sweet and Cheesy, Old Fashioned Kettle Korn, White Cheddar popcorn, and Golden Karmel Korn. I sell 65% at Festivals like the County Fair, Car shows, and various festivals around Kansas City. 25% of my business is through Retail outlets, where I supply weekly to specialty stores, gas stations, medical centers, and Farmer's Markets. The final 10% is done for special events like weddings, graduations, employee events, and internet sales.

My daily business tasks include deliveries, banking, paying my bills, and sending out invoices, as well as popping kettle korn to keep up with the demand. My gross sales started out $15,000 in 2005. They doubled in 2006 and have now tripled. Sales in 2016 were just over $67,000. I have 7 seasonally employees. I even pay taxes. I am a success because of teamwork and the commitment my parents have made to me.

Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn began with the Mission of: 1) Honoring God in all I do, 2) To be a blessing to other people, 3) To purpose excellence, 4) To grow profitability. I am a member in the community that I work in, which gives me a place to belong. I am a contributing citizen and am able to do fundraisers for local churches, schools, businesses and communities events, as well as for many non-profit organizations. I shipped kettle korn to the troops in Afghanistan. My community values me.

In 2008, Poppin Joes helped me move into my own home. I love my freedom—it gives me a great life! I go to work during the day, and hang out and do fun activities at night, just like most business owners. I have many activities I enjoy, like shooting hoops, horseback riding, swimming, traveling, skiing, going to amusement parks, water surfing, sky diving, lifting weights, scuba diving, spending time with my family and friends. My business has also

enabled me to have many adventures, going places and meeting people I would not otherwise get to meet. I have been invited to travel and share my story with groups across the country. This has brought me many new friends, and expanded my business even further.

My business works for me. It creates new opportunities for me to grow as a person, and to be an engaged, valued member of my community. With the right support system, being a self-supporting entrepreneur can be, and is, a reality for me. Thank you for inviting me.

I have been blessed by incredible parents who have advocated for me from my birth. They saw my potential, they knew that I could succeed. They have helped me make my business a reality, and a continued success.

I love being 'Poppin Joe'. It is an honor to be here. Thank you.

*Article is from Joe's Power point presentation he uses with his augmentative device to tell his story.

Joe Steffy is 30 years old and lives in his own apartment in Louisburg, Kansas and is the owner of Poppin Joe's Kettle Korn. www.poppinjoes.com

SourceAmerica

"Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All"
House Committee on Small Business
Thursday, May 19, 2016 10:00 AM

Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velázquez, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record for the May 19, 2016 hearing, entitled: *Help Wanted: Small Business Providing Opportunities for All.*

As the Committee continues to explore the role small business has played in expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities, including identifying existing best practices, I want to share some information about SourceAmerica, the AbilityOne Program, and our role in growing employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities including intellectual and developmental disabilities. SourceAmerica applauds the Committee for bringing attention to this important issue, and would like to offer our assistance for finding solutions that benefit small business and the tens of thousands of people with disabilities served by SourceAmerica.

As you may be aware, SourceAmerica is a national leader in creating job opportunities for a skilled and dedicated workforce: people with significant disabilities. We are one of two AbilityOne authorized enterprises that facilitate the AbilityOne Program for the Federal government. We accomplish this in concert with a nationwide network of more than 1,000 community nonprofit agencies with whom we fulfill contracting service and products needed by the Federal government, commercial businesses and government contractors. Our network provides training to people with significant disabilities, assists them in identifying employment choices, and then enables them to be successful at work.

In FY2015, our network employed more than 113,000 individuals with disabilities; nearly 43,000 through the AbilityOne Program, where the average wage was $12.80. Additionally, our network placed approximately 24,000 individuals with significant disabilities into community employment opportunities with small businesses and other community employers. Source America's mission to expand employment opportunities and choices for people with disabilities requires a strong commitment to working with small business to meet the government's requirements. Our nonprofits routinely partner with small businesses for services and products through subcontracting or teaming. SourceAmerica is an independent nonprofit organization and complies with all federal and state requirements, including those related to the administration of the AbilityOne Program., and does not represent the U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, an independent federal agency responsible for regulating the AbilityOne program.

SourceAmerica has invested significant resources researching, demonstrating, and piloting multiple initiatives to assist individuals who historically have not participated in competitive, integrated employment with small business or community employers, to join that segment of the workforce.

Pathways to Careers
Our Pathways to Careers initiative relies upon state-of-the-art employment strategies to enable people with significant disabilities (including those with the most significant disabilities) to have an informed choice of competitive, integrated, full-wage employment options that match their individual skills, interests and abilities across a broad range of community settings, including small businesses. The initiative primarily focuses on achieving this goal for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and individuals with serious mental illness/psychiatric disabilities (SMI). By design, it seeks to accomplish three major objectives needed to achieve the overall goal:

- Remove (minimize) existing barriers and disincentives to full participation in the workplace for individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits and related Medicaid and Medicare benefits;

- Create an incentive for small businesses, community employers and public employers to hire and retain individuals with significant disabilities; and
- Improve and expand ongoing employment supports for individuals with significant disabilities, including those with episodic or recurring disabilities, and provide assistance with employment retention and career development.

SourceAmerica has partnered with Mathematica Policy Research to evaluate the Pathways initiative. Mathematica has assisted in the development of information systems that are being used continuously to collect and analyze pertinent data. One of the key components of the overall evaluation plan is a cost savings analysis designed to assess the extent to which the employment outcomes of Pathways participants are likely to result in cost savings to state and federal governments.

Franchise Partnership
For many entrepreneurs, franchising is a proven successful model towards owning a business. To that end, SourceAmerica has embarked on an initiative to partner with businesses to offer franchise, employment, and training opportunities to people with significant disabilities. The diversity of jobs created by these franchise opportunities ranges from owner/president through middle and operating management, supervisors, and direct labor positions. This initiative offers the potential for people with significant disabilities to build wealth through small business ownership and executive management in addition to traditional employment. Since launching, our franchise partnerships have created over 60 new jobs for people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment. SourceAmerica has negotiated with national franchise companies to create employment opportunities including:

- Papa Murphy's Pizza
- Subway
- Link Staffing Services
- UPS Stores
- Auntie Anne's
- College Hunks Hauling & Moving
- The Coffee Beanery
- DOMA Document Solutions
- Five Star Painting
- Brain Balance Achievement Centers
- Auto-Lab Complete Car Care Centers
- National Maintenance Contractors
- Zeroez Carpet/Tile Cleaning
- 101 Mobility

Small Business Incubator (Connecticut Enterprise Center)
SourceAmerica has supported the efforts of CW Resources, a SourceAmerica nonprofit located in New Britain, CT. to develop and launch the Connecticut Enterprise Center (CEC), a business incubator dedicated to creating an environment that fosters the success of small or start-up businesses; to creating new jobs in an economically depressed area; to encouraging and fostering the employment of individuals who are physically, mentally and/or socio-economically challenged; to operating more small business incubators. Since its inception, 25 businesses have created 100 jobs in the community. There are currently 7 tenants at CEC.

- Lastool
- Dolce Vita Gelato
- Rebuilding Together New Britain
- Ariston Specialties
- Rosie Chocolates
- Maxim Tool
- RK Machine

Through these initiatives, SourceAmerica has taken the lead in efforts to promote programs and policies that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities with small business and community employers while ensuring that an array of options remain in place for those who remain unsuccessful in competitive integrated employment. If replicated on a larger scale, these concepts could yield the type of results that the Small Business Committee has begun exploring. SourceAmerica would be very pleased to provide the Committee with more detailed briefings on these and other initiatives in which we are engaged.

Thank you for considering our statement. Please feel free to contact John Kelly, Vice President Government Affairs and Public Policy at jkelly@sourceamerica.org or (571) 226-4691 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John Kelly
Vice President, Government Affairs and Public Policy



TESTIMONY OF JOSE H. VELASCO

HEAD OF AUTISM AT WORK INITIATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES

SAP

HEARING ON

The Global Autism Challenge

Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Committee on Foreign Affairs

United States House of Representatives

July 24, 2014

Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass and Members of the Subcommittee:

SAP would like to thank you for your leadership and for providing us the opportunity to share our views on autism and its global impact.

My name is Jose Velasco; I am responsible for the Autism at Work Initiative in the United States for SAP. SAP is a global leader in enterprise software with more than 67,000 employees providing business solutions for over 250,000 customers in more than 130 countries. SAP systems are at the core of large parts of global IT, powering more than 65% of the transactions that make up the world's gross domestic product (GDP).

Today I would like to share with you the SAP Autism at Work Initiative which in partnership with Specialisterne was launched globally in 2013 with the purpose of providing meaningful and rewarding employment opportunities for people in the autism spectrum in core areas of our business.

The Autism Challenge

It is estimated that 1 in 168 individuals is affected with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) globally. These numbers are suspected to be higher as the ability to diagnose and address autism varies from country to country.

In the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control, about 1 in 68 children is affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders. Autism affects boys more often than girls, with about 1 in 42 boys and about 1 in 189 girls.

According to a recent study carried out by the University of Pennsylvania, The London School of Economics and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the lifetime cost of an



individual with autism with an intellectual disability averages $2.4 million while the cost of a person with autism and without an intellectual disability approaches in average $1.4 million. These costs go beyond education and therapy encompassing lost productivity of caregivers among other factors.

It is estimated that the total annual cost to the United States to care for those with autism is in the range of $175 billion to $196 billion; depending on the percentage of people with autism considered to have an intellectual disability (40% and 60% are figures that are typically estimated).

Various other studies point to an unemployment rate in the range of 70% to 80%.

A Potential Opportunity

While the autism problem is significant and pervasive, reaching every corner of the world, SAP believes that there is a real opportunity to leverage the skills of people with autism in the workplace.

With one of the worst turnover rates of any industry, high tech could benefit from recruiting skilled employees who stay the course, as replacement costs in our industry can reach levels as high as 150% of the annual salary of a person being replaced.

According to Forbes, there are approximately 100,000 unfulfilled Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) jobs in the San Francisco Bay and New York areas alone. We at SAP have come across very qualified people who have more than adequate credentials to fill jobs in functions that range from HR to Engineering, but who are also in the autism spectrum, and for that reason have not been able to secure a job, often times unable to get past the first interview.

People with autism represent a significant source of talent in both vocational and professional areas. For employers to tap into this talent pool, it would be important to re-think talent acquisition processes that range from interview methods to retention practices.

The SAP Autism at Work Initiative

In support of these views and in support of SAP's mission to help the world run better and improve people's lives, SAP in Partnership with Specialisterne, announced on May 21, 2013 the inception of the Global Autism at Work Initiative, a unique effort to train people with autism worldwide for employment into core functions of the company, including but not limited to software development and testing. SAP's objective is that by the year 2020, 1% of its workforce will be represented by people in the autism spectrum, roughly 650 positions, based on SAP's current global workforce of over 65,000 employees.

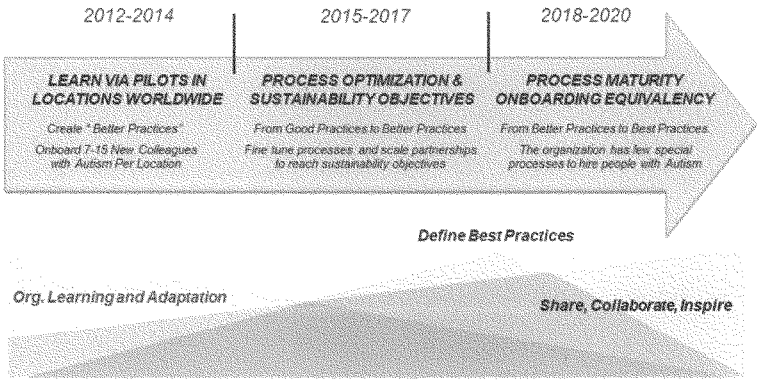
The Autism at Work Initiative is a fundamental paradigm shift on how SAP hires and retains the best possible talent. SAP is bending existing processes and creating new ones as needed to accommodate the employment of people in the autism spectrum.

Since this announcement, SAP has successfully implemented pilot programs in India, Ireland, Germany, Canada, the United States, and is in the early planning stages of a pilot program in Brazil. SAP is currently evaluating the implementation of Autism at Work pilot programs in other locations that may include China, France, Bulgaria and South Africa.

The purpose of these pilots is to distill learnings from various locations resulting in the creation of global processes templates accommodating the local reality of places where we hire colleagues with autism. It is expected that by the end of 2014 SAP will count with approximately 55 colleagues with autism worldwide, and that by 2015 that number will increase to more than 150.

SAP's expectation is that by the year 2020, the company will reach onboarding equivalency in those locations where people with autism are hired. This means that the effort of hiring a person with autism will be little different than hiring anyone else.

An additional important objective of this initiative of SAP for this initiative is to share the experiences we have gained through this pilot with other companies and to hopefully inspire them to start their own autism at work initiatives.



SAP Autism at Work Roadmap

SAP's Motivation

There is a rationale behind our efforts to employ people with autism at SAP. We at SAP firmly believe that a cornerstone element of innovation is the diversity of those who participate in the creative process and the perspectives they bring to the table. The relentless pace of innovation in the high tech industry is of key importance as obsolescence and irrelevancy can happen in very short time cycles.

Alan Kay, a renowned computer scientist, fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering, once said that a different perspective is



worth 80 IQ points. SAP believes in capturing the perspectives of those who look at the world differently, as it is only through those eyes that we will be able to invent richer and more rewarding solutions for our customers.

There is also a significant body of research that points to the affinity of people in the autism spectrum to science and arts. Hans Asperger, Viennese pediatrician after whom Asperger's syndrome was named once said: "It seems that for success in science or art a dash of autism is essential. For success, the necessary ingredients may be an ability to turn away from the everyday world, from the simple practical, an ability to rethink a subject with originality so as to create in new untrodden ways, with all abilities canalized into the one specialty".

According to Prof. Simon Baron-Cohen, a strong supporter of SAP's Autism at Work and head of the Autism Research Center at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, there is strong evidence, under current accepted criteria, that Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, among many luminaries, were in the autism spectrum. Albert Einstein had no friends in childhood, was late to speak, and when he spoke, he did so with echolalia, where he repeated back what he heard. These traits exhibited by Albert Einstein are all consistent with people in the autistic spectrum. Other personalities in the autism spectrum include Susan Boyle, winner of Britain's Got Talent, actors Daryl Hanna and Dan Aykroyd, as well as professor and author Dr. Temple Grandin.

While not everyone in the autism spectrum has the skills and abilities of some of these famous personalities, it is not uncommon to find unique talent within our communities who today are unemployed, partially employed or underemployed and who with some training can carry out functions spanning vocational and professional work.

Workplace Challenges for People with Autism

But while many people in the autism spectrum may have valuable abilities, it is the accompanying set of challenges associated with the condition that prevents them from pursuing and attaining rewarding employment. Among the principal challenges associated with the condition that we find are social interactions and communications. Reading social cues and dealing with ambiguity can be difficult for many people with autism.

Someone in the spectrum may interrupt a colleague at work who is visibly busy as he or she may not be able to read the other person's body language. And if asked "to be transparent", a person with autism may interpret this literally, as someone asking him or her to permit the uninterrupted passage of light through their bodies instead of interpreting the request as asking them to be open, candid or frank.

Some people with autism may also have hyper-sensitivity to sounds or light. As Dr. Stephen Shore, a Professor at Adelphi University who is in the autism spectrum shares: "those down lights in the ceiling feel like I am looking directly into a spotlight, they can be painful". Dr. Shore wears a baseball cap as a means to address his sensitivity to light. A person with



autism may also have other negatively perceived traits such as failure to look at other people in the eye, reduced ability to smile or not being able to offer a strong handshake.

The challenges for people in the autism spectrum start when they first arrive at a job interview, perhaps wearing a baseball cap, perhaps having a weak handshake, perhaps not smiling or not being able to make eye contact. These "interview killers" are the reason why many people who are otherwise qualified to do a job, are deemed not a good fit for an organization.

In-spite of Autism and because-of Autism

Many people in the spectrum also exhibit narrow interests, rigid routines, low tolerance for mistakes and "fascination with object parts", as children often times observing things like the wheels and pistons of a toy steam locomotive for hours.

These narrow interests, rigid routines and low tolerance for mistakes are also key traits of people who are good in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). This is where the traits start to blur between ability and disability, and where some innate characteristics of many people in the spectrum can be of high value in the workplace.

As a software company, SAP views the value that our new colleagues with autism bring to the table in two ways: *"in-spite" of autism* and *"because of" autism*.

- *In spite of autism* and the challenges associated with this condition, our new colleagues have arrived at our door displaying resilience, loyalty, dedication and a burning desire to work.
- *Because of autism*, we are able to capture the innate abilities that are often times associated with people in the autism spectrum. These abilities may not all be present in every individual but generally include a gifted memory, a natural ability to recognize patterns and deviations in systems, processes and data and/or the ability to concentrate and persevere on tasks over long periods of time while remaining attentive to very small details. We have also observed a very low tolerance for mistakes, an essential trait in any job but particularly important in technology related jobs.

In general we believe that there is a strong affinity between the natural ways of our colleagues in the spectrum and software development and IT. This affinity exists in great part due to the unambiguous, precise and predictable nature of the type of work we do.

The Global Autism at Work Initiative Organization

The SAP Autism at Work initiative is spearheaded by the Global Diversity and Inclusion Office of SAP AE. The initiative counts with a global program office as well as country-specific leads.

As each location is faced with different opportunities and challenges, the Autism at Work initiative is a **global** effort with a central governance model, but providing sufficient execution flexibility to accommodate the **local** reality of each location.



Global and Local Partnerships

Recognizing that SAP as a company is not an expert in autism, a global partnership was established with Specialisterne to implement the autism at work initiative. Specialisterne's experience and tenure in the field of training and procurement of opportunities for people in the spectrum and their employers, has been a great asset in SAP's Autism at Work journey.

Partnerships have also been established locally in the United States with the Department of Rehabilitation of the State of California (DOR) and The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the State of Pennsylvania (OVR). SAP has also partnered with The Arc of Philadelphia and Expandability, two non-profit service providers of OVR Pennsylvania and DOR California respectively. Specialisterne, as trusted advisor, has assisted with the implementation oversight of our end-to-end processes.

SAP has a strong partnership with the Ernie Els foundation and has partnered in the past with the Dan Marino Foundation.

SAP has also established partnerships with Universities such as Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, and is in the process of establishing partnerships with Universities in the United States. These partnerships range from academic/research purposes to sourcing programs for talent in the autism spectrum.

The SAP Autism at Work Training Process in the United States

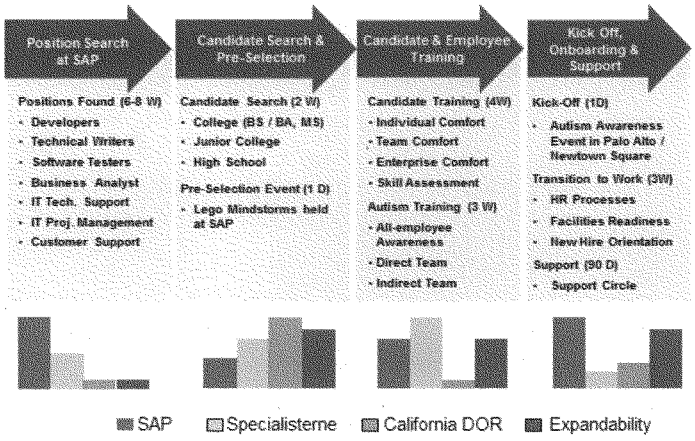
The SAP Autism at Work initiative in the United States was just kicked off in January 2014. As of May 2014, twelve individuals have been onboarded into permanent positions at SAP Labs in Palo Alto, CA and SAP America in Newtown, Square, PA.

Upon exploring positions in various SAP departments that would be conducive for a pilot program, twelve full-time job opportunities have so far been identified spanning the following roles: software developers and testers, business analysts, technical writers, IT technical support staff, IT project manager and Customer Support associates. Each position has a career ladder at SAP with compensation packages and benefits similar to those of any other colleague in the company in similar positions and seniority.

Position descriptions were provided to DOR and OVR (in California and Pennsylvania respectively), who identified candidates with autism within their client base. These DOR/OVR candidates subsequently participated in a one-day pre-selection event held at SAP with participation of Specialisterne, Expandability and SAP.

This one day pre-selection event replaces traditional interview practices that typically consist of multiple interviews and where interviewer and interviewee seat in opposite sides of a table. SAP now utilizes Specialisterne's methodology consisting of a "Lego Hangout", where candidates are asked to spend a day at SAP "playing" with Lego Mindstorms. Candidates utilize Lego Kits to build robots based on a set of instructions. Throughout the day each candidate is asked to move go to a different area for a short conversation to learn

more about their interests and background. A Pizza lunch is served halfway through the day making this a fun-filled and relaxed event.



Autism at Work Pilot Program Process implemented in Palo Alto, California.
The Pennsylvania process is similar but delivered via local partnerships with OVR and The Arc.

At the end of the pre-selection event, the candidate list is narrowed down to those who will proceed to the next step in the process: candidate training.

Candidate and personnel training consists of a 4-week program that is funded by DOR and OVR respectively and hosted by SAP. The training was delivered utilizing Specialisterne methodology by the Arc and Expandability.

The main objective behind this training is to provide a soft transition to professional life via specialized modules addressing personal, team and enterprise comfort levels for the new candidates. It is during these four weeks of training that managers and team buddies start getting acquainted with the candidates participating via a number of activities that range from demonstrations to lunches to small assignments provided by the managers. Buddies are team members peers to our new colleagues who will work with them side-by-side.

It is also during this time period that SAP employees and managers are trained. Employees are segmented at a high level in three categories as depicted in the following chart and role-adequate training / support is provided.



	High-Interaction Employees Colleagues who regularly collaborate with new colleagues with ASD	Medium-Interaction Employees Colleagues who occasionally interact with new colleagues with ASD	Low-Interaction Employees Colleagues with no interaction with new colleagues with ASD
General Autism and AaW Awareness Session	90 Minutes	90 Minutes	90 Minutes
Autism Classroom Training	1/2 Day	1/4 Day	
On the Job Coaching (Team &Individual With ASD)	60-90 Days		

Coaching Need

- Direct Managers
- Direct Team Members
- HR Business Partners

- Security Staff
- Health Staff
- Cafeteria Staff
- Indirect Team Members
- Recruiters

- Field Employees
- Sr. Management

Intensity of interaction with ASD-Affected Colleagues
Function-based specificity of information needed to interact with ASD-Affected employees

SAP Autism at Work Pilot Program Employee Training Strategy

SAP Autism at Work Mentors

It is also during the 4-week training period that a call for volunteers takes place for "Autism at Work Mentors". The Autism at Work Mentors are employees who typically have a strong affinity with the topic of autism, in many cases due to knowing a family member or friend who is in the autism spectrum.

Currently, SAP Autism at Work US has 28 Autism at Work Mentors.

Backgrounds of our Candidates in the United States

Candidate's educational backgrounds in the United States range from high school to junior college to college. Candidates range in age from early 20's to late 40's. Two female employees are part of the initial group in the United States. Most of our new colleagues were unemployed, partially employed or underemployed prior to joining SAP.

Post-Onboarding Support in the United States

After candidates finish the 4-week training program and managers have provided approvals for employment to commence, candidates spend the next two+ weeks in administrative tasks filing applications and getting further acquainted with the company among other things.

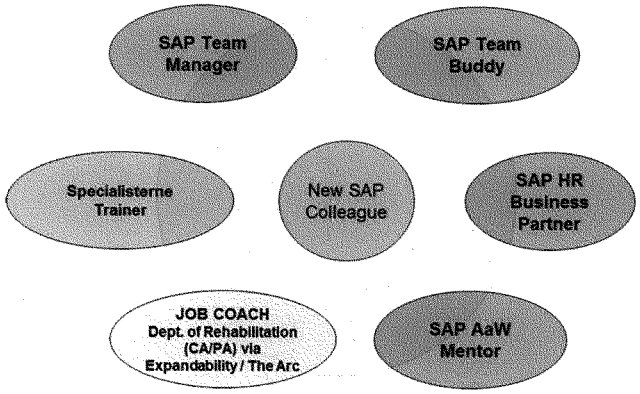
Once our new colleagues are fully onboarded into their respective teams, a support circle is finalized and implemented.

This support circle consists of six individuals.

- SAP Team Manager
- SAP Team Buddy

- SAP HR Business Partner
- SAP Autism at Work Mentor
- Job Coach from Expandability/The Arc funded by DOR/OVR respectively
- Specialisterne Trainer

Job Coaching and support is provided for the first 60-90 days of employment by Expandability and The Arc. Feedback from managers points to outstanding support delivered by Expandability and The Arc.



SAP Autism at Work Support Circle

Life Skills

In some cases, our new colleagues may need assistance with skills that go beyond the work place. These "life skills" include transportation to-and-from work, food preparation, time management, and personal care and leisure activities among others.

Through The Arc and Expandability, our new employees with autism in the United States have benefited from coaching and advice that have allowed them to grow and become more independent.

Early Results from SAP Autism at Work Pilots

- Early results from our autism pilots indicate that our new employees with autism are integrating well into their teams. Cohesiveness within teams has increased.



- While the processes that have been put in place to train and support our new colleagues and their teams are in a continuous improvement phase, feedback at this time is very encouraging across the board:
    - **Janis Oberman, New Employee** "I am a 56 year old woman who had prior experience in the IT industry. I had been unable to obtain full-time employment since I was laid off in 2001. However, I had kept my skills current though underpaid part-time work and a returned to graduate school. So, I am **thrilled** to get this opportunity to work for SAP as a QA specialist in a Business software development department. Also, the Specialisterne training (with the robots) was phenomenal and I've received more support than I could have hoped for. I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome as an adult, like most people my age, who could not have met the more restrictive criteria for Autism in the 1960's. Additionally, no more SSDI!!! That saves the government $21,959 per year (adjusted for inflation), totaling **$263,508** (for 12 years on SSDI).
    - **Anonymous, New Employee** "SAP has leveled the playing field by recognizing the communication and learning style of those that are on the autism spectrum. The habits previously seen as quirks are being recognized as a keen ability to pick up detail quickly to benefit our employer, SAP."
    - **Ben Shaibe, Team Buddy** :"Since our new colleague joined our team as a software tester, my day has become brighter, my work more interesting and my feeling of purpose even greater"
    - **Holger Graf, Hiring Manager**: "We are very grateful for the opportunity to be part of this initiative. We have two new colleagues in our team; they are well on their way to being great contributors in the SAP Customer Support Organization"
    - **Gunther Rothermel, SVP** "We can certainly make a lot of progress as society if we dedicate more attention, research and energy to people with special needs, so that we can tap into their talents and abilities"

Early Recommendations to Other Potential Employers

- Partnering with Key Entities a key element of SAP's success is the establishment of partnerships with non-profit and state/local government organizations.
- Executive Sponsorship and Grass-Roots Support: without these two elements it is difficult to implement a program.
- Crawl, Walk, Run: plan a multi-year approach. SAP recommends that companies carry out a pilot or pilots to learn, then work on streamlining processes and culture, and lastly, reach scale.



Outlook

- SAP's mission "to help the world run work better and improve people's lives" continues to be the driver for the SAP Autism at Work Initiative.
- As planned, SAP will move into its process improvement phase in 2015 onboarding additional new colleagues with autism across locations worldwide.
- SAP wishes to inspire other companies to start their own Autism at Work programs and to collaborate to improve the availability of opportunities for people with autism

Conclusions

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass and Members of the Subcommittee:

The ultimate goal of diversity and the Autism at Work program is for SAP to attract the best possible talent. Companies that consciously look for people considered outliers in the workforce will be able to innovate and succeed.

We have a long journey ahead with many things to discover, but we feel confident that with the help of our partners, we will be able to continue to leverage the talents and abilities that people in the autism spectrum bring to the workplace.

SAP has been approached by more than 15 companies interested in understanding how our program was conceptualized and implemented. Our hope is that we will continue to inspire others to start their own Autism at Work programs and soon have more companies who can share their experiences.

On behalf of SAP's Diversity and Inclusion Office and the employees who have made this initiative possible, we would like to thank you once more for this opportunity to share our experience.

On behalf of many families like mine who are touched by autism, thank you for your leadership.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions.

