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THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AT 22: A NEW GENERATION OF IOWANS APPROACHES THE LABOR FORCE WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS

FIELD HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AT 22, FOCUSING ON A NEW GENERATION OF IOWANS AND THEIR HIGH EXPECTATIONS AS THEY APPROACH THE LABOR FORCE

JULY 13, 2012 (Cedar Rapids, IA)

Printed for the use of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Available via the World Wide Web: http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

93–425 PDF WASHINGTON : 2015

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
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THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AT 22: A NEW GENERATION OF IOWANS APPROACHES THE LABOR FORCE WITH HIGH EXPECTATIONS

FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2012

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Cedar Rapids, IA.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m. in Iowa Hall, Rooms B, C, and D, Kirkwood Community College, Hon. Tom Harkin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senator Harkin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARKIN

The CHAIRMAN. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions will come to order.

The title of this hearing is "The Americans with Disabilities Act at 22: A New Generation of Iowans Approaches the Labor Force with High Expectations."

I might just add at the outset this is an official meeting of the Senate Committee that I chair, and that's why we have a court reporter here to take things down.

Later this month, on July 26, in celebrations across Iowa and across the United States, the anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act will take place. Thanks to the ADA and other civil rights laws, Iowans with disabilities have far greater opportunities to participate in the workplace and in the life of our communities.

I was honored to be the Senate sponsor of the ADA during my first term in the Senate, work that was inspired by my older brother, Frank, who became deaf as a child, but he refused to settle for the low expectations of some of the professionals who told him that his job options in life were limited, that he could be a baker, a cobbler, or a printer's assistant, and that was it.

But during Frank's lifetime—he is now deceased—I saw firsthand how communications access improved for him and hundreds of thousands of deaf and hard-of-hearing people thanks to the ADA and other laws, such as IDEA, the Rehab Act, and others.

Today's hearing is an opportunity to learn about the hopes and dreams of what I now call the ADA generation, a diverse group of youth and young adults with disabilities who have grown up with opportunities for equality and integration created under the civil

rights laws like the ADA and IDEA and the Rehab Act. In my experience from working closely with the disability community for decades, from chairing hearings in Washington, DC where young adults with disabilities have testified, and from the many interns with disabilities who have worked in my office, I'm very excited about what the future holds for this ADA generation.

They have grown up in an America that gives them realistic expectations of full participation, equal opportunity, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency; the four pillars of the ADA. These young people are truly helping to redefine what is possible for people with disabilities to achieve in education, in employment, in all facets of American life.

I know also that this ADA generation has high expectations for themselves, especially about what they can aspire to do in their careers. The vast majority of youth and young adults with disabilities do not want to drop out of high school, or graduate from high school or college and then retire into a lifetime of supplemental security income. They want to work in competitive, integrated settings. They want to achieve economic self-sufficiency, and given opportunities and appropriate supports, the vast majority aspire to find meaningful work, to be a part of the middle class, with the same hopes and dreams as other Americans.

Today we're going to hear from three remarkable young Iowans I call the ADA generation, Emilea Hillman, Nate Trainor and Alex Watters, each of whom has translated their personal high expectations into promising employment in integrated settings that is consistent with their interests and their life goals.

Then we'll hear from a store manager at the Cedar Rapids Walgreens who will talk about that company's experience in building partnerships and pipelines that are helping youth and adults with disabilities become an integrated part of the labor force.

We'll hear from leaders of two critical Iowa agencies, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Division of Mental Health and Disability Services, about what their agencies are doing to invest in this ADA generation to help them achieve their goals.

I just might say, before I close, that we think about the impact of the ADA locally in terms of our State, and local communities. But that Act inspired a movement around the globe in terms of other countries looking at what they need to do. This culminated several years ago in the United Nations drafting a convention, which is a treaty, on the rights of people with disabilities. Well, the U.N. takes a long time to do things. It took them several years to get it done, and then they put it out for ratification by member nations.

One-hundred and sixteen nations have signed on to it now, plus the European Union. Yesterday I was honored to testify with Senator John McCain and others before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, because under our laws, a treaty like that is first sent to the White House. The White House then has to send it out to the Justice Department and all these other places to make sure it's OK, and that takes a couple of years. Finally, it came back. President Obama sent it down to us a couple of months ago. The Foreign Relations Committee had a hearing on it yesterday, at which I testified, and I hope that this convention will be reported out and

we'll get it on the floor and pass it. We need a two-thirds vote to pass it and we hope to do so before July 26, our 22d anniversary.

I say that because here we are; what we did in this country, again going all the way back to other things like IDEA and the Rehab Act, and then ADA, others like that. We really did spark a global movement in this area. So here we are, we should be the leaders in the world and we should ratify this convention so that when other countries now, when they sign on, they've got to change their laws and change things so that they are under the provisions of this treaty. They have to be in compliance with it. We don't have to do anything. We are in full compliance. We don't have to change anything.

But as these other countries start to work to get in compliance, we should be at the table with them providing the leadership, the guidance, and the direction, and that's why it's so important for us to do that.

Now, the other reason I mention it is because when we think of young people, like the young people here today, as being part of the American workforce in the future, but there's going to be a global workforce out there too, and there's going to be a global workforce of young people with disabilities in other countries who also have high expectations, who no longer are going to just be shunted aside and put in the shadows.

This whole thing has taken on a great life. Not only do young people with disabilities have to be in this labor force, they're going to be part of a global labor force around the globe. So in one way it's very encouraging that America has inspired the rest of the world this way. It's also kind of daunting to think about what we need to do to maintain our leadership in this area, and that's sort of a little bit of what this hearing is about.

What are we doing, and what should we be doing, to maintain that position of providing opportunities? I just looked at USA Today, and there's a story in here about the unemployment rate for teens is 24.6 percent, young adults age 20 to 24 is 13.7 percent. Among teens and young adults with disabilities, it's about three times that much. They're talking about 60-something percent. So as we begin to increase, I hope, and regain our employment opportunities in America, we make sure that people with disabilities are brought in also.

Andrew Imperato just gave me a note here and said there are three people here that go back a long ways who helped with the passage of the ADA back in the 1980s, late 1980s, up to 1990, and at the risk of leaving somebody out I will recognize Julie Beckett, who is here, and Evelyne Villines. Where is Evelyne? Oh, Evelyne is right here, Evelyne Villines, and Sylvia Piper. Sylvia is back there.

[Applause.]

Thank you all very much.

We go back a long way. They were all inspirational hard workers in getting the ADA passed.

Now I'd like to introduce our first panel. After their statements we'll go to our second panel.

Our first witness is going to be David Mitchell. He is currently the administrator for Iowa Voc Rehab Services. He has been with

IVRS for 12 years, served in a variety of supervisory roles before becoming administrator last year. Prior to joining IVRS, he worked in rehabilitation services in central Iowa for nearly 20 years in both the public and private sectors. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Iowa State University and a Master of Science Degree from Drake University.

Next, joining Mr. Mitchell on our first panel, is Rick Shults. Mr. Shults is the Mental Health and Disability Services Division administrator for the Iowa Department of Human Services. He previously served as the director of Mental Health Services for the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and has worked in a variety of administrative and management roles for programs serving people with developmental disabilities and mental health needs over the past 36 years. He has a Bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon and an MBA from Pepperdine University.

As an official hearing, I read over your statements as I was flying out here last night. They're very good. All your statements will be made a part of the record in their entirety. I would ask if you could maybe sum up in several minutes what points you want to make, and then we can have a discussion. So we'll do the first panel.

I know one of you has to leave because you have to get back to Des Moines.

So we'll start with you, David. Welcome, and please proceed as you so desire.

STATEMENT OF DAVID L. MITCHELL, MS, CRC, ADMINISTRATOR, IOWA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, DES MOINES, IA

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you very much, Senator. We really appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments regarding the ADA and its historic impact as a landmark piece of legislation.

I certainly agree with your comments about the progress that's been made with improving access to the physical environment, access to information, access to assistive technology resources. But we also recognize we still have work to do as we look at the promise and the hope that the ADA has with the field of employment.

Taking one of your challenges from last year, I went out this time and met with our 13 area offices, met with over 200 of our rehabilitation field staff, and shared a little bit of the ADA story and the fact that people with disabilities are still challenged to get into competitive, integrated, community employment. If we have approximately 4.5 million people with disabilities into the labor market, and our goal is to move that to 6 million by 2015, what are we going to do as a State agency to move that forward?

I think we're going to hear a little bit later today from our young adults, and I think we'll be impressed by their persistence and their passion and their energy. We'll also be impressed by their advocacy and their personal support systems. I think we recognize as service professionals that not all individuals have those support systems, and we need to do better to fill those gaps to allow everybody to have opportunities to compete in the labor market.

There are challenges that we face, and I know as an agency we've had a shrinking budget. We're about 9.5 percent less than we were in 2009. We have hiring freezes on staff capacity. We have struggles with competing pieces of legislation, and we need support for programs that complement our services, like benefits planning with the Social Security Administration.

But with those challenges come tremendous opportunities that we have, and I'd like to just take a few minutes to highlight seven pockets of excellence that we think we're pushing forward. We can't do this in isolation. We do it with partnering and collaboration and networking with our other community resources and providers, and we really are excited about the opportunities we have lying ahead.

One of the little phrases that has kind of come together as we've met with partners is "the stars are aligning," and we're going to be able to push forward with the momentum that the ADA has had in the last 22 years to create the next 22 years to really focus on employment for people with disabilities and our youth.

So, seven quick highlights.

No. 1, youth leadership. We co-sponsor, with the Iowa Department for the Blind and the Iowa Department of Human Rights, a youth leadership forum, and in that forum young adults that are in the secondary and post-secondary school system can come together to look at advocacy, self-sufficiency, independent living skills, and begin to address their interests and preferences for the world of work, and this is really the foundation for what is going to come in future years for the youth.

No. 2, the Collaborative Transition Protocol. This is a partnership that we have with the Iowa Department of Education and individual school districts. The Iowa Department of Education has taken a stance with a response to intervention method, which really looks at young adults focused on their strengths, their interests, their preferences, and not focused on a disability label. So as we move forward with VR, we've been able to look at targeted groups of individuals who really focus on their strengths and their interests, moving away from the perceptions that come with the label, and we're excited about how that's being implemented across the State of Iowa.

No. 3, Transition Alliance programs and Project Search. Our Transition Alliance programs, we have six of them in the State of Iowa. Again, this is a partnership with the State Department of Education and school districts where we're leveraging resources to increase staff capacity to provide work-based experiences for kids in the secondary school system. We know from our studies that individuals who get work experience, and where those work experiences occur out in the community, have a better opportunity for future success. So this is an opportunity that we've had to leverage resources and partner together, and we're excited about that, and we're trying to push forward and expand that program.

Project Search is a nationally recognized program that really coordinates classroom activities with the world of work, and we have two programs we're excited about. One is in our northern Iowa Mason City area that's really taken on by the leadership of one of our community partners, the North Iowa Vocational Center. Through their leadership, we've worked with the local hospital and

the Mason City school district to give young people chances to get out in the world of work and experience what it's really like.

We're starting a new program in Des Moines with Easter Seals Center and with the Des Moines School District and Mercy Hospital. Again, this is a chance to integrate school curriculum with the needs and skills that are required by our business partners, and we think this will be a real opportunity to expand work experience.

No. 4, staffing agencies. We've had a unique opportunity this past year to work with staffing agencies, and in particular manpower staffing. This has been kind of a closed door to vocational rehabilitation. We haven't really looked at this as an opportunity in the past, but staffing agencies have a viable role as they meet business needs. So we've been able to expand their awareness of disability awareness needs, as well as talking about a whole different diverse pool of qualified work applicants, and we're hoping that this will be able to expand opportunities for people to get into companies that typically have had closed doors.

No. 5, entrepreneurship, the whole idea of self-employment as an informed choice option. We have three business specialists that work with our adults with disabilities, and you'll hear from Em a little bit later too, again, and her personal story and the advocacy and support she's had. But these business specialists were involved with 55 new business startups for 2012, and 172 in the last 4 years, and we're going to continue to grow and expand that.

No. 6, Employment First. Through the Office of Disability and Economic Policy, Iowa is one of three States that receives special funding to move the whole concept of what we're looking at with integrated, community-based, competitive employment in the State of Iowa. We're partnering with multiple partners across the State to really look at that, and one of our partners is the Department of Human Services. We're looking at funding and rate realignment and how that needs to be done to support individuals with the most significant disabilities. We're looking at six pilot projects that will look at customized employment strategies that will hopefully provide new opportunities that we haven't been able to capture before.

Then we're also looking at how, as State agencies, we work together to make sure that we're being effective in our resources, minimizing duplication, and that the decisions we're making support our Employment First goals.

And finally, **No. 7, business employment network**, and this is one area that I'm probably the most excited about. You mentioned, Senator, the whole idea of the global economy. Well, through the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, they have really pushed forward this concept of the business network, focused on meeting business needs and that business is a partner. The more we are able to recognize the business needs and the issues that they have, how do we help meet that, we're going to be more successful in helping our youth and adults transition into the world of employment.

We'll hear a little bit from Ron Frank, a manager of our local Walgreens store in Cedar Rapids. But Walgreens as a national initiative is one of many companies that have really jumped on the bandwagon here to say how can we help, through a qualified, di-

verse workforce, meet our business needs, and we're finding ways to partner with that.

In Iowa, we're one of several States that Walgreens is going to be looking at implementing a retail training program, again based on how do we take the skills and interests of our candidates, match them up with the skills and needs of our business community, and we're really excited about those opportunities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act has provided opportunities and encouragement for all of these practices, and we really are pursuing a promise that the ADA has helped create. We're very excited about the work of the HELP Committee and your support, Senator, as we move forward with employment for individuals with disabilities and really uniting in legislative efforts to call for full employment for all people with disabilities. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mitchell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID L. MITCHELL, MS, CRC

Senator Harkin and committee members, thank you for this opportunity and privilege to share thoughts and practices regarding the positive and life changing impact the Americans with Disabilities Act has had and will continue to have as a new generation of youth with disabilities transitions into the employment environment. My name is David Mitchell and I am the administrator of the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in the State of Iowa.

Perhaps no other time in our Nation's history has a cohort of students graduated where disability is nothing more than a normal condition in life and technology levels the playing field. Students who are deaf may use video phones and other technologies to interact with the "hearing world" if they haven't had a cochlear implant early in their lives. Students with learning disabilities may access electronic readers so that textbooks are accessible and they can demonstrate their intellect and not their challenges. Robotic chairs now facilitate individuals who are in wheelchairs to stand, move around, and return to a seated position whenever necessary thereby opening traditionally inaccessible jobs. With the enactment of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) the ingenuity of the American spirit catapulted researchers and developers to consider limitless possibilities, which fueled the hopes and dreams of individuals with disabilities to experience life in a whole new way. It is only natural that high expectations for independence, economic support and full integration into community-based, integrated competitive employment not only occurs, but should be demanded.

Students with disabilities transitioning from secondary to post-secondary environments of living, learning, and working, are native to technology and inspire those of us in the service profession to embrace a vision of the future that had only previously been an idea in a science fiction movie. For these students, the digital divide is nonexistent as they are the first generation to grow up with technology and disability together, and because of the ADA can now realize a future of promise. They are empowered to take control of their destiny and we have the privilege of joining them as we connect with their informed choices.

The informed choices of these students have expanded since the adoption of the American's with Disabilities Act; and as a result opportunities are limited only by the confines of imagination. The combination of the ADA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Workforce Investment Act facilitated the development of high expectations and aspirations of individuals with disabilities, parents, educators and adult service professionals working with them. This combination provided impetus to move beyond the status quo and enter a new millennia of human potential . . . and the youth led the charge.

An example of youth leadership is provided by the Youth Leadership Forum. (YLF) IVRS has been an advocate and partner with the Iowa Department of Human Rights in the delivery of services and programs supporting YLF. The goals of YLF are:

- Young people with disabilities will become employed and self-sufficient;
- Young people with disabilities will be knowledgeable about resources available to them to become successful adults;
- Young people with disabilities will be exposed to professionals with disabilities who are recognized leaders and role models.

YLF is an example of a service delivery program providing leadership training to youth with a set of high expectations impacting service delivery options.

Along with leadership and advocacy comes the need for increased informed choices. The Iowa Department of Education began the discussion of informed choices with the decision to move away from labeling students with disabilities to focusing on their potential as they adopted the "Response to Intervention" to determine eligibility for special education services. This strategy aligned most significantly with the dignity of the student and eliminated disability categories from the educational nomenclature. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) was the next organization to respect and embrace this design through the Collaborative Transition Protocol, which allows IVRS to determine eligibility of students with certain disabilities without requiring a categorical educational "label." Instead the focus is on the strengths and needs of the student. While IVRS continues to categorize the student in the case record as is required by the Federal Regulations and accounting to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), it is no longer the focus for programming and decisionmaking that it was prior. The impact this has on the staff working with students with disabilities is tremendous and shifts the orientation of early rehabilitation to one of collaboration and partnership with the students and their team. Even though other adult services continue to require the categorization of the individual due to their legislations, which does create challenges for service coordination, many students in transition are expecting service delivery systems to respect their choices and facilitate their employment outcome. IVRS has innovatively developed the Collaborative Transition Protocol and received approval through the Rehabilitation Services Administration to implement the process across the State. We have been working collaboratively with local school districts, vocational rehabilitation field offices and area education agencies to create common understandings as this protocol is implemented. A change in the legislation that might further impact this effort is confirming the ability to accept the Individual Education Plan (IEP) as documentation that the student has a disability, which would meet the first criterion for VR eligibility. Schools are required to perform a comprehensive evaluation prior to making eligibility determinations for special education services through an individualized education program (IEP). If VR was able to use existing documentation in the IEP for all students it would provide expanded efficiencies and provide opportunities to focus on the strengths and needs of the student.

Employment Outcomes begin with the student and parent expectations, but are influenced by business and industry demands. Prior to the American's with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities were viewed as a challenge by business and industry. Concerns over how disability might impact their insurance costs, productivity, and work environment often influenced hiring decisions. Since the inception of the ADA and recent amendments, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation has enthusiastically developed partnerships with business and industry to create a more diverse workforce. This is part of a national trend sponsored and endorsed through the Council on State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) with their National Employment Network. Through the use of paid and unpaid internships, IVRS connects business and industry with qualified job candidates. The results of this service have been promising. At IVRS, 67 percent of individuals with disabilities who participate in this type of training obtain employment and it appears as the training develops more fully this percentage may increase. This service connects business and industry with a job candidate pool that employers did not know existed. In creating these opportunities, businesses are discovering a job candidate pool that has the skills and education to meet their current and future workforce needs.

During the summer of 2012, IVRS will be a lead agency partnering with the Walgreen's Corporation on an Iowa initiative and Walgreen's national initiative to positively impact training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. A focused, intense occupational skill training program is implemented onsite at the business and engages the individual job candidate with real business practices. Through a combination of community partnerships, vocational rehabilitation planning and counseling and school/family supports, additional opportunities will be provided to help meet the high expectations of competitive, integrated community employment.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in meeting the needs of business and industry is connecting students in transition while they are in high school and before they formulate their post-secondary plans. While there is an IVRS staff person assigned to every high school, there is not enough capacity to serve every student in those high schools. Attempts by IVRS to connect business and industry using a systemic approach through a cooperative agreement were discontinued due to Rehabilitation Services Administration's interpretation of regulations because all students, and not

just students with disabilities, would benefit. So while business and industry desires to connect with students in transition the mechanisms and strategies to do so continue to be isolated with diminishing returns for the business owner because of the inefficiencies created by competing regulations. A broader interpretation of VR transition services that take place prior to or as part of the student's application for VR services should be recognized as part of the VR transition process. These services can be delivered individually, to groups of students with disabilities or to groups containing students with and without disabilities. Activities under this category include, but are not limited to career fairs, orientation meetings with students and families and classroom trainings provided by VR transition staff in collaboration with education staff. Ensuring the option for services to be provided to groups containing students with and without disabilities is consistent with the requirements for services to be provided in the least restrictive environment. This also has the benefit of preparing the future workforce to develop relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Another challenge in meeting the needs of business is the competing funding needs of various community and organization programs. I firmly support and believe in the role vocational rehabilitation plays in meeting the high expectations of our consumers and business partners and support the role of our RSA Commissioner. The strong partnership and link with the Department of Education ensures vocational rehabilitation is an invited partner to high school staffings and further integrates adult service providers into the transition mix. The qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor has a unique role and creates a positive difference in the delivery of professional services integrating employment needs with the strengths, abilities, and interests of an individual with a disability.

The value of the VR counselor assisting students in developing employment plans is a key to our future workforce and, many times, also requires the use of benefits planning to create a roadmap out of poverty for those students on SSI. The funding and support of complimentary programs such as the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) for VR counselors to use and access qualified benefit planners has been a definite asset in facilitating transition from government benefits to economic independence for many of our State rehabilitation consumers. IVRS, as well as many of our State VR programs, do not have the staff or financial resources to carry out all of the proposed service needs that are necessary for fully effective transition services. The potential loss of these services and the expertise of the people who work in the programs would have a negative impact on all of our consumers, including those in transition.

Iowa has approximately 70,000 special education students with IEP's. Approximately 20,000 of these students would be in the secondary school system. Our current active case load for all consumers being served by IVRS is 11,482. Our average professional staff person is working with an average of 100 individuals on their case load. IVRS has not been able to match all of our Federal monies and in fact, have had 9.5 percent decreased funding from 2009 with less professional staff and overall personnel. This has resulted in IVRS having a waiting list of approximately 3,200 individuals.

Through a focus on innovation, leadership and improved work effectiveness, IVRS has been successful in moving forward with positive transition services. In 2011, 33 percent of our referrals were from transition students and transition students contributed 38 percent of our employment outcomes. Our transition outcomes averaged 35 hours per week at an average hourly wage of $10.78. This compares favorably with the general adult caseload which averaged 33 hours worked per week at an average hourly wage of $11.48.

Another positive service delivery strategy includes the options of entrepreneurship. IVRS self-employment program is growing and through specialized programming 55 businesses are successfully in operation in 2011 and 172 over a 4-year period. IVRS and the Federal/State vocational rehabilitation program have proven to be a positive return on investment. Through the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in Iowa, during 2011, individuals with disabilities earned $15.7 million more than was spent on the entire VR program.

If we are going to fully embrace pre-employment transition services and transition services to students with disabilities, we need line-item funding for transition services, with no State-match requirements and advocacy with our States to remove barriers with filling staff vacancies. Those efforts will enhance our abilities to carry out necessary transition services and better meet the hopes and expectations for services that individuals with disabilities have as well as assist in the carrying out of the promise of the ADA.

This is a team effort involving collaboration and networking from many. IVRS is an active partner with the Iowa Workforce Development Board and is finding cre-

ative ways to collaborate in helping problem solve employment gaps in Iowa. Iowa Work Force has recently announced an initiative to help meet the employment gaps being expressed by Iowa businesses and IVRS is integrating strategies to move forward with an integrated employment vision. In 2010 Iowa's workforce had 38 percent of the job applicant pool competing for jobs defined as "low skills" but there were only 18 percent of available jobs that required "low skills"; while 50 percent of the available jobs required "middle skills" and only 33 percent of the potential applicant pool demonstrated "middle skills". Middle skills are defined as those jobs which require more than a high school diploma, but not a 4-year degree. Middle skill education and training can be obtained from employers, community colleges, apprentice programs, nonprofit community-based training organizations and private career schools.[1] Middle skill jobs create a gateway into the middle income brackets for workers. Businesses have demonstrated a need for qualified workers as evidenced by the gap between the numbers of individuals qualified for such jobs and the job market. We believe it is essential that IVRS create these connections for these businesses with students while they are in high school and making life changing decisions regarding their employment future. Imagine the future of the Iowa economy as successful employment connections occur through the provision of effective vocational rehabilitation counseling and training opportunities for students in transition. Creating this road map into the middle class will put those high expectations created by the ADA into reality. The barrier is no longer the attitudes of business and industry, but rather the capacity to make these connections within the confines of regulations and our service delivery system.

IVRS has pockets of excellence in providing these connections. Transition Alliance Programs (TAP) in Iowa has proven, since 1997, to not only stimulate a work orientation in students, but produce employment outcomes. Federal fiscal year 2011 data on these projects demonstrate that students who participate in TAPs are positively correlated and more likely to:

1. Be competitively employed after graduation from high school; and/or
2. Pursue post-secondary training.

These programs provide students the opportunity to learn about careers, requirements to work in those careers, connect with businesses through work experiences, and develop confidence and skills necessary to contribute to their communities. The Rehabilitation Services Administration Longitudinal Study demonstrated that students who participate in at least two work experiences have a higher propensity toward being competitively employed after high school than students who do not have these experiences. This is also supplemented through various education and transition data. On June 11 and 12 of 2012, I was able to attend and participate in the Iowa statewide Special Education Conference Program. This was hosted by the Iowa Department of Education and IVRS professionals played a contributing role in training sessions. The conference was entitled, "Pursuing the Promise". Martin Ikeda, Ph.D., Bureau Chief and State Director of Special Education (school-aged), Iowa Department of Education, facilitated the State conference and noted in his opening remarks that,

> "if we are truly going to deliver on the promises of educational equity made a generation ago, we need to do something more, and we need to do it together. Every child in the Iowa public school system deserves to make a year's growth in a year's time, and to have a team of caring individuals working together to prepare that child for life after high school."

"Pursuing the Promise" was an opportunity to discuss how to deliver on high expectations for those involved in the transition of our youth. One of the presenters was a young man named Tyler who has a disability and had graduated from the Waterloo School District in Iowa and is now in his fourth year of college. Tyler's dream is to change the way the world interacts with people with disabilities and his approach has focused on the individual's strengths and abilities, what they can do. This approach provides opportunities for us to use the foundation of the ADA, to ask how we can improve employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and recognize the need to do things differently now than what we have done in the past and to do so with a sense of urgency. Much like the high expectations being experienced through the foundation of the ADA, we need to have high expectations regarding our secondary and post-secondary training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. IVRS is carrying forward the conversation of collaboration and partnering at the local school district level and recognizes the vital role families, youth, teachers, community programs and vocational rehabilitation have in ef-

[1] *Middle-Skill Jobs in Iowa, May 2012*, Labor Force and Occupational Analysis Bureau, Iowa Workforce Development.

fective transition planning and implementation. The integration of work and work experiences should be an education intervention and as quoted in one of the sessions by Dr. Richard Luecking, president of TransCen, Inc. "all kinds of amazing things happen based upon what is learned in work experiences."

Work experiences connect the IDEA and Rehabilitation Act requirements of Transition with the high school experience. The focus of those two pieces of legislation in Transition is about creating a meaningful experience, where students understand that what it is they are learning has practical applications for their future. By weaving together the work experiences with the classroom environment students experience a meaningful course of study and businesses in Iowa benefit.

One nationally recognized program that coordinates classroom curriculum with business requirements is Project Search, which IVRS will be implementing in the Des Moines School District in the fall of 2012. IVRS is also partnering through the leadership of one of our community rehabilitation providers, North Iowa Vocational Center, a Project Search in Mason City, IA which is now going on its second year of operation. The Mason City Project Search is serving eight individuals. The Des Moines Project is anticipating serving 13 students during its first year of operation. Students, who meet the level of eligibility criteria to be considered the most significantly disabled, will attend high school at a local hospital where they will learn the skills necessary to work in a variety of occupations that occur in that type of environment. Through their work experience, coordinated with their classroom academics that are taught at the business setting, these students develop confidence and understand the connection between school and work. This partnership between IVRS, the local school district, a community rehabilitation provider and a major employer in the area will create opportunities for these students who, as they transition, will become employed in a "middle skill" industry and develop a foundation for a promising employment career. High expectations drive the planning for these types of programs and these practices have developed with the birth and aging of the ADA.

Entrance into the middle class is the expected outcome from the IVRS Blueprint for Change created in 2011. This was developed through review of research and agency data to create the IVRS Blueprint for Change identifying seven expectations of results that will transform the Iowa Rehabilitation Services Bureau within 10 years. Those expectations, which when put into practice locally, are measured by the success of the individuals with disabilities obtaining employment. Those seven expectations are:

1. Be the undisputed authority on connecting individuals with disabilities to employment.
2. Engage and inspire our job candidates, partners, and business community.
3. Ignite the human potential of our job candidates and business partners as they connect.
4. Expand the opportunities of individuals with disabilities while connecting to and supporting our businesses with qualified job candidates.
5. Be a leader in ethical service delivery.
6. Create innovative employment services worthy of our job candidates and needed by our business partners.
7. Demonstrate an accountable and sustainable employment services model.[2]

As a result of this blueprint, IVRS staff are creating employer accounts and has seen an increase in businesses and industries that are contacting IVRS to hire qualified job candidates. An example of an innovative practice occurring in many States, Iowa included, is a project with Manpower Staffing to access business accounts that only hire permanent employees through them. In addition, conversations with community partners and county governments are stimulating ideas for programs to serve the chronic mentally ill in a manner that pre-emptively strives to create employment connections for this population before they go on Social Security benefits. If we are able to reach out and provide services prior to creating dependency on benefits or consider alternative ways to integrate an employment vision based upon a foundation of benefits that can meet maintenance needs and allow for participation in occupational skill training, we can begin to positively impact the employment cycle. Through the day-to-day operations, IVRS staff is being given the authority to identify and develop solutions on processes and policies that impede employment of individuals with disabilities. The synergy from the ADA puts these blueprint activities into practice that prior to the ADA would never have been realized.

[2] Adapted from *Onward*, by Howard Schultz.

In high schools, IVRS staff work with local educators to implement the Transition Vision jointly developed with Local Education Agencies to work more cohesively together to serve students, while minimizing duplication of services. While each local district is in varying levels of implementation of that vision, together they are focused on creating a system that creates a seamless experience for the student. Perhaps the greatest opportunity for improvement in this vision is the infusion of business expectations and the self-advocacy of employment rights.

In considering the employment climate and the attitudinal barriers prior to the enactment of the ADA in comparison to where we are today, it is clear that the winds have changed. Businesses want and need to be able to link to this new diverse workforce. Iowa continues to have a challenge in promoting a community-based, integrated competitive employment vision across all of our statewide employment programs. IVRS has taken a lead role in promoting and implementing The Employment First Initiative, which challenges everyone to consider competitive, integrated community-based employment before any other type of post-school sheltered employment activity. This cause may speak more to the attitudes of the professionals in the industry and those who grew up prior to living their lives under the ADA, than to the students with disabilities who are looking forward to a brighter and promising future, where they will have full access to integrated community employment. There is still work to be done to fulfill this promise.

This past school year graduated for the first time, students with disabilities who grew up knowing that employment in the community was not a luxury but a right. While there remain obstacles to achieve this vision, there is optimism in what has been accomplished and hope on what might be yet to come:

- Continued diligence of professionals focusing on the possibility and not allowing policy barriers to be experienced by the individual is essential to achieving full inclusion.
- Creating business relationships so information can inform the counseling discussions with students in transition so their informed choice expands their horizons and thereby changes the landscape of the Iowa economy.
- Celebrating the uniqueness of all individuals through a comprehensive understanding of abilities and assets and finding ways to integrate those with the future workforce needs of business will create change.
- Creating capacity through system development that encourages integration and recognizes that through interaction the barriers become only perceived and more easily eliminated.
- Celebrating the human connection of every student, utilizing strategies to unlock their unique potential, encourages a fully integrated workforce.
- Creating connections between educators and the business community to inform the educational system and raise the academic skill sets of all students.

The American's with Disabilities Act had a vision for the American workforce. No other single legislation had as much impact on uniting the American business community in a call to full employment. Collectively with the IDEA and WIA the trifecta is the success of the American enterprise and the hope of tomorrow's workforce. We can aspire and make the future we seek.

The CHAIRMAN. That was very good. Thank you very much, Mr. Mitchell. That was great.

[Applause.]

That was very good.

Now we'll turn to Mr. Shults. Please proceed as you so desire.

STATEMENT OF RICK SHULTS, MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITY SERVICES DIVISION ADMINISTRATOR, IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, DES MOINES, IA

Mr. SHULTS. Thank you very much. I really do very much appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the celebration of the 22 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act and all that comes along with that. Since I have grown up in the profession under that promise of improvement for integration of people with disabilities, I greatly appreciate all the work that folks have done in order to support that. I'm very pleased to be able to be here today.

It really has established, though, very high expectations. We need to live up to those expectations, and the expectations of the

ADA generation. I like that term very much. And I think it's very important that we hear from people what their expectations are, and that we attune what we do to their expectations and not to ours. That's what we have to live up to.

It's very hard to cover the whole aspect of all of the positive things that have happened with the ADA and the promise, so today I'm going to focus on individuals, youth with serious mental illness and the importance that employment plays in their mental health recovery.

We know that as many as 12 percent of individuals in the United States between the ages of 18 and 25 have a serious mental illness, and they have a much greater likelihood of becoming involved with the criminal justice system and not completing high school, as you mentioned earlier; and without adequate support they're less likely to live healthy lives, less financially secure, have higher rates of unemployment, have higher rates of homelessness, and are subject to substance abuse. So without adequate supports and services, this could be a tragedy, not only for them but for their family and for the community and society as a whole.

It's very important that we provide the kinds of supports that are necessary for these individuals to experience recovery. But recovery comes in a wide array of packages. It includes the clinical treatment for mental illness. It includes the involvement of the person, the family, their friends in that treatment process. But equally important, we need to have them fully included in society.

Just 6 months ago, we did a large survey across the State and asked individuals what was the most important thing in your life, and what kinds of services supported that, and we were pleased to hear that individuals with mental illness reported that, yes, indeed, quality clinical services are important to their lives, but equally important to their lives are the services that are provided that provide them the supports to live independently and allow them to work in integrated, competitive settings.

That is a clear message to us that, yes, indeed, we have to provide quality clinical services, but we also have to offer additional support to allow them to live successful, healthy, successful, competitive lives in their homes and communities.

We also know that employment is critical to individuals' mental health recovery. My staff told me the story of Betty just the other day, an individual, a young lady that lives with serious mental illness. She was experiencing significant mental health recovery in her life, and she had reported that to the people she works with and her case managers.

The case managers were so pleased they invited her to come in and share a testimony of her mental health recovery. Interestingly enough, she shared all of the positive things about her life, the kinds of things that have allowed her to experience that recovery, and then ended her testimony with, "but I will not feel that I have experienced full mental health recovery until I have a job." The people in that group learned much from Betty's testimony and, as a matter of fact, turned around that day and made sure that they were working with her to provide her support for her job, and she has that today.

Employment is critical to mental health recovery. We in Iowa are working hard to move forward to try to live up to that expectation. As we speak today, we have the Olmstead Consumer Task Force meeting, and I will be leaving from here to go to the second half of that meeting this afternoon to provide an award for one of the advocates of that group. But that's a unique group, and it's very reflective of the efforts in Iowa. It is a group of individual consumers of mental health and disability services, advocates for those services, and representatives of a wide array of State agencies who come together to look at how well we're achieving the principles of Olmstead and what more we can do to move forward to reach that vision.

With the help of the university and many others, that Olmstead Consumer Task Force has been critical. It has been so critical, in fact, that it has been a key feature in the development of our mental health and disability services redesign in Iowa, and I'll talk a few minutes about that.

Mental Health and Services Redesign is an act that was passed in a bipartisan fashion by legislators such as Senator Jack Hatch, Representative Renee Schulte and many others who led this through the legislative session last year, and it really is three pieces of hallmark legislation that is going to allow us to move even further than we've ever been before in the integration of individuals with disabilities in the community.

One aspect of that redesign is making certain there is an access to minimum kinds of services in every region of the State, and those services are defined in various domains. One of the domains is support services for employment. That means as we go forward in the development of regions to administer mental health and disability services, every region in the State will be required to provide services that support individuals to achieve their goal of integrated community employment.

Another aspect of Mental Health and Disability Services Redesign is evidence-based practices, and that requires that the services that are provided follow evidence-based practices and use those kinds of services that are effective. So not only are services accessible, but they're also effective.

An example of that is Bill, who grew up in a small Iowa town. After he graduated from high school, he had multiple co-occurring challenges in his life. He got together with his case manager. They decided he wanted to work. They got him a job in the local cafe washing dishes, which is a typical story that you often hear.

However, Bill took that further. With the help of his case managers and others, he learned the entire business. He learned how the restaurant operates, and my staff came to me just the other day celebrating the fact that Bill had been given the keys to that restaurant because he could now open and close the restaurant. He could run that cash register. He could do all aspects of the restaurant, and he has become a valued member of that community, and he is now in the process of phasing out the support team he was getting because he is becoming completely self-sufficient. So we're very pleased with that.

[Applause.]

So that ties into the effectiveness. We have to not only have access to services, but they must be effective, and I will look forward to hearing more about that from this panel. I'm very pleased to be able to hear that.

Those effective services allow us to raise the employment standards, but we're not using those evidence-based practices enough. So we need to move forward in implementing those evidence-based practices much more effectively across the State.

Monitoring our success. Another aspect of Mental Health and Disability Services Redesign is the requirement for measuring outcomes and having performance measures, one of which is making certain that persons with disabilities, including youth with serious mental illness, are competitively employed, and that we gather that information, that we measure that information, and we regularly publish it so we can see how we're doing and we can hold ourselves accountable because, after all, we only do what we measure. And if we publish that and lay it out before us, we will always remember to focus on that service.

We have other aspects that we're undertaking. We appreciate the Federal Government providing us through CMS additional Federal funds through the Balancing Initiative Payment Program which provides additional funding for community-integrated programs. We appreciate our partnership with the State Leadership Employment Network, SLEN. We have some folks from SLEN here in the audience, and the work that they're doing to support us is greatly appreciated.

And collaboration, as David said, collaboration among State agencies, we have a shared vision that individuals with disabilities should have the opportunity to be competitively employed, meeting regularly so that we can look at each of our areas that we're responsible for to ensure that we're working together to the best effect of providing supports and services for individuals that want to be employed is critical to the success of this effort.

The most important thing as a result of all of that is having people that want to work holding us accountable for what we do. We'll hear some more about that today, about the successes, but involving individuals with disabilities and advocates in policymaking, in providing us feedback, in holding us accountable for what we're doing so that we can live up to their expectations. I do think that's the promise of the ADA, full involvement.

I am very pleased to be a part of Iowa's effort to fully involve individuals with disabilities in policy planning, in governance, in involvement in our work groups, and in peer support, which I will tell you over and over again, individuals coming up to me and saying when are you going to expand peer-support services because of how critical those services are. I hear that often through our Office of Consumer Affairs.

So we really invite people to hold us accountable, because if we're not doing the right things to provide the support, it's really not our lives that are affected. It's the lives of the people with disabilities, their family, friends, and their community. So we look forward to that accountability.

So thank you for the opportunity to celebrate today, 22 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to share a little bit about

the direction that we're headed under Mental Health and Disability Redesign that's built on that foundation of the ADA, and moving forward to achieve the expectations of the ADA generation. Thank you.

[Applause.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shults follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD SHULTS

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Richard Shults. I am the administrator for Mental Health and Disability Services in the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS). I appreciate the opportunity to celebrate 22 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to share some thoughts about how we can all work together to help meet the high expectations of the new generation of Iowans as they enter the labor force.

The ADA has had and continues to have significant positive effects on the lives of persons with a wide variety of disabilities in many different aspects of their lives. It is impossible, in this short time, to recount all of the many positive aspects of the ADA. While in my role, I am concerned about the success of all Iowans with disabilities, today I will focus my remarks on youth with a serious mental illness (SMI) and the important role integrated, competitive employment plays in their mental health recovery.

The American Psychological Association reports that 12 percent of youth between the ages of 18 and 25 have an SMI. These youth have a threefold likelihood of becoming involved with the criminal justice system. Sixty percent of them do not complete high school. Without adequate supports and treatment, people with an SMI live less healthy lives, are less financially secure, have higher rates of chronic illness, and are vulnerable to unemployment, homelessness, and substance abuse. Without adequate support and treatment an SMI can become a personal, family, and societal tragedy.

However, recovery from mental illness is possible. With the help of adequate supports and services Iowans with mental illness can and do live safe, healthy, productive, successful, self-determined lives in their homes and communities. The hope of recovery is real.

Recovery is supported by many things: effective evidenced-based treatment; full involvement of the person, family, and friends in the person's treatment; and full integration into society. Full integration into society includes competitive employment. Employment provides a meaningful activity that gives youth with an SMI a positive identity, a sense of purpose, and value. Employment is key to the recovery process.

We can and must do more to ensure the justifiably high employment expectations of Iowa's next generation are met. In Iowa, we are undertaking that effort. Iowa has embraced the principles established through the *Olmstead* ruling. In fact, as we speak, Iowa's Olmstead Consumer Task Force is meeting and discussing progress being made in meeting these principles and identifying additional steps to improve progress toward a full life in the community for persons with disabilities.

Last year, following directions provided by the Legislature, Iowa engaged a series of workgroups to recommend a redesign of the Mental Health and Disabilities (MHDS) system. Over 200 Iowan's participated in these workgroups and over 1,000 attended "Listening Post" meetings across the State. The resulting workgroup reports included recommendations consistent with the principles of the *Olmstead* decision. A bipartisan group of legislators used the workgroups' recommendations as the basis for the recently passed MHDS Redesign Act.

One aspect of the MHDS Redesign Act is to ensure that basic core services are accessible in every region of the State. One of the core service domains that regions will be required to provide is support for employment. This means that persons with disabilities in every region in the State will have access to services that support their goal for seeking and keeping employment.

The MHDS Redesign Act also requires that services and supports be evidenced-based thereby ensuring services are both accessible and effective. Supported employment has evolved into an evidenced-based practice for finding and keeping persons with an SMI employed. Evidenced-based supported employment focuses on individual placement of the person's choice in competitive, integrated employment. It minimizes the use of screening for employability, transitional employment, or prevocational training. Instead, the goal of supported employment evidenced-based practice is to find a natural "fit" between the person's strengths and experiences and jobs in the community.

Without evidenced-based support, employment rates of youth with an SMI are 20 percent or lower. Research shows that evidence-based interventions raise this to an average of 58 percent. We have known these approaches are successful for many years. In preparing for this testimony, I reviewed research from the early 1990s that confirmed the effectiveness of these approaches in helping people with an SMI get and keep jobs. But we do not use these evidenced approaches frequently enough and the employment rate for persons with an SMI remains unacceptably low. Clearly much more improvement is needed.

To help monitor and motivate this change the MHDS Redesign Act requires that performance-based outcome measures be established, measured, and published. One critical outcome is the extent to which persons with disabilities, including youth with an SMI, are competitively employed in integrated settings. Such measures not only keep us all accountable for the effectiveness of the supports and services we provide, but identify pockets of excellence that we can learn from. As the adage says, "We do what we measure." Regular publishing of outcome dashboard indicators, including the extent to which people are competitively employed, will help focus our attention on this important goal.

In addition, Iowa is taking advantage of tools made available by the Federal Government to help achieve employment and other recovery goals. Iowa has recently been approved for the Balancing Incentive Payment Program (BIPP) designed to bring balance to the amount Iowa pays for institutional services compared with community-based services, like competitive employment. The BIPP provides additional Federal Medicaid matching funds that can be used to assist with expanding the availability and effectiveness of community-based services.

Iowa is also a member of the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). SELN brings together State Developmental Disability agencies for sharing, educating and providing guidance on practices and policies around employment of persons with disabilities. National SELN staff, some of which are housed in our MHDS offices, are currently evaluating what more DHS could do to ensure employment support services are successful. DHS' somewhat unique administrative structure allows the practices and approaches learned through SELN to be used to support persons with many different disabilities, including youth with an SMI.

It is critical that all agencies charged with similar goals work in concert and collaboration with one another to better achieve the goals. In Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise, the Iowa Behavioral Health Plan, the State Developmental Disability Council, and Mental Health Disability Services have a shared vision of employment for people with disabilities and have developed a close working relationship. Our staffs talk regularly in an effort to coordinate our activities to the best effect for the people we support.

The most important aspect of living up to the expectations of the new generation of Iowans is to ensure they are involved and empowered. When services are not accessible or effective, it is not our lives we are affecting, but those with disabilities, their family, and friends. It is important people are empowered to hold us accountable for achieving the expectation of competitive work. In Iowa we are doing this through the establishment of the Office of Consumer Affairs, participation in local listening posts, involvement of persons served in policy advising workgroups and regional governance boards, and the expansion of peer support services. Through these and other consumer-driven efforts, we will be more responsive in ensuring the employment expectations of the new generation of Iowans is met.

I would be happy to take any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both very much.

It's really encouraging, isn't it, to see that we have public servants of this caliber who are devoting their lives and their work to making lives better for others, to make our society work better? Every time I hear someone bash bureaucrats or whatever, I think of people like Mitchell and Shults. Aren't they great?

[Applause.]

There are some people from the State Employment Leadership Network out here. Are some of you here who are involved in that network? I just wanted to recognize you and thank you for your involvement in it, some people back there, up here. Thank you very much for your volunteerism in that regard.

I just have a couple of questions. You were both so very good and comprehensive.

David, you hit upon something that we have heard about so many times in the past, and that is you called it work experiences. I kind of call it internships, but getting to kids with disabilities when they're in secondary school and getting them hands-on work experiences so that they have an appreciation for what might be out there, encouragement, but also maybe to find out maybe there are some things they don't like to do, too, and they can say, "Well, I don't like to do that, maybe I want to do something else," and to give them that kind of internship.

Would you speak again about how you see that, how important that is?

Mr. MITCHELL. I definitely agree with you, and we certainly found that the more opportunities we have in providing community experiences, the more opportunities individuals have to make better informed choices, and that's on things that they don't want to do also.

So certainly our role, as we look at how do we engage with education, is to look at what are we doing to push forward individual education plans that focus on an employment outcome, and you need to provide experiences with that. It can be as simple as going out and doing some job shadowing, doing some role playing with mentors out in the community, matching them up with business partners they have some interest in, career planning and life changing experiences that will help somebody figure out, well, this is something I never even thought about doing, but I found out I have a passion for it now. It could be some volunteer opportunities.

As you expand on those types of steps, you begin to look at, well, how do we integrate those ideas that we're getting into some opportunities that will promote economic self-sufficiency, and that's where we get into some paid experiences, and they build upon each other.

The CHAIRMAN. That No. 7, that business employment network, is that part of that too, about getting these kids early on into an experience?

Mr. MITCHELL. Yes, sir. I think Walgreens will talk a little bit about their experiences working with youth and adults. But it's really getting somebody an opportunity to see, well, what does it mean to get to work on time? What does it mean to get back from a break on time? How do we deal with the social skills and independent living skills that impact employment?

As we're able to provide those opportunities, we can learn so much. It really is a chance that we can aspire to do the work that we want to do through learning from those work experiences. I think the business network and being able to look at the business needs provide some opportunities that build a foundation to say, "Well, if you want to be able to do this type of occupation, here are the skills, here are the types of job tasks that that would involve." And as we provide opportunities for a person to learn about those things, we're building that foundation for future success.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Rick, you mentioned something that I wanted to bring up here, and that was the peer-support services. Elaborate on that a little bit more for me, will you? Especially when it comes to youth with

severe mental illness and how you build peer-support services. Just inform me a little bit more about the value of that.

Mr. SHULTS. Absolutely. Having someone who has had a lived experience with a mental illness and is currently working—whether it is in peer support or other settings—on being able to talk to a youth that's experiencing a severe mental illness is invaluable, because I can't come to an individual and say, "Well, you know, things are going to get better, we're going to be working through this process," but I don't have that lived experience, I don't have that credibility. To be able to have someone who has the credibility, has the lived experience and can demonstrate to that youth that, yes, this is difficult, this is challenging. We don't diminish that at all, but you will go through these steps of recovery, and there is hope.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you developing a cadre, for example, or a group of people?

Mr. SHULTS. Yes, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. A lot of times, people who have been through a serious mental illness and who have now gotten better and they're employed, sometimes they don't like to talk about it. So you have to bring them out and get them to mentor other people. Are you developing that kind of group?

Mr. SHULTS. Exactly. Actually, I was trying to remember, in the next month or so there's going to be training that's sponsored by our Iowa Behavioral Health Plan to train more peer-support workers, and we're going to make a larger emphasis. We do use Medicaid funding to fund peer-support workers, and what we need to do, then, is for those individuals who are not Medicaid eligible, also make that available, and that is part of the future of Mental Health and Disability Redesign.

So, yes, improving our training, making that training regularly available and reaching out to individuals, and then providing a reasonable reimbursement and support for those folks who do that valuable work.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure. They've got to travel sometimes.

Mr. SHULTS. Yes, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. You need that kind of support for that.

Mr. SHULTS. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you both very much. You're welcome to stay as long as you'd like and listen. I thought some of you might have to leave.

Who mentioned the youth leadership forum next week? That was you, David? Andrew Imperato, who is my staff director on this, is going to be speaking at that next week. I might inform you that some of you know Andy. Andy was with me back when we did ADA, back in those days. He was just a young kid then.

[Laughter.]

Mr. IMPERATO. And so were you.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks a lot.

It was so vitally important. And then he left and started something called the American Association of People with Disabilities, built it up into a national organization, became its president and CEO. He got it all going and then decided that he didn't want it

to be all about him, so turned it over to other people, and now we have him back running our operation in the U.S. Senate. So it's nice to have Andy back, and he's going to be speaking at that youth group.

[Applause.]

Now we'll turn to our second panel, and we're going to start with Ron Franks.

Ron Frank has worked for Walgreens for 27 years. He's been a store manager for 20 years. He's currently the store manager of Walgreens store on 29th Avenue in Cedar Rapids. His testimony describes how his Walgreens store has partnered with Goodwill of the Heartland and Sportability of Iowa for supports and recreation programs to enhance employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.

I'll let him describe all that. I just might mention, for the benefit of the people here, that sometime ago I became acquainted with a guy by the name of Randy Lewis, who is with Walgreens, and I saw a video of his that just blew me away about the employment of people with disabilities. Then I asked him to come testify before this committee in Washington several months ago.

Out of that, Greg Wasson, who is the CEO of Walgreens, which is a big operation, obviously, invited a bunch of CEOs up to Windsor, CT, and that was about a month ago, a month-and-a-half ago, something like that, and we brought together CEOs from a lot of different organizations, UPS and Office Max and Best Buy and Lowe's. This was really a high-level meeting, and what Wasson and Lewis wanted to show was how Walgreens had gone out and, through training and full integration, had people with disabilities working right alongside people without disabilities, and it benefited their bottom line. It was actually better for them to do that.

It was so encouraging that out of that now, we're going to have another meeting of CEOs that's going to take place in Dallas, TX, I think, later this year. So this whole thing is expanding.

I think you mentioned, David, about the goal of 6 million. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce last year invited me down to speak with them. That's sort of rare for me.

[Laughter.]

And we all agreed, and they came out. They did a wonderful thing there. They are really promoting again the 6 million, about a 20 percent increase by 2015, of people with disabilities in competitive, integrated employment.

[Applause.]

I wanted to say that as a way of paying my compliments both to Ron and also to Walgreens, who have done a great job.

Ron, your statement is made a part of the record. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF RON FRANK, MANAGER, WALGREENS, CEDAR RAPIDS, IA

Mr. FRANK. Thank you for letting me speak today about a subject I'm very passionate about, and also thank you for taking care of the first sheet of my speech here.

[Laughter.]

As you said, I've been with Walgreens 27 years, and I just moved to Cedar Rapids about 5 years ago. We started this program

through Goodwill of the Heartland, a skills training program for individuals with disabilities—it's a 120-hour curriculum where they combine classroom work and on-the-job training.

They come into the store. We usually have maybe three to six individuals, and in my back hallway by my office we have a table back there and we teach them all the skills from counting the register, customer service skills, how to greet a customer, how to talk to a customer, team work, stocking, cleaning, anything that needs to be done in the store.

They learn the skills, and then they come out into the store and work with my team members. It's been very beneficial for my staff having them into the store.

I also, throughout the program which is 8 weeks, get to see them every day for 8 weeks, and that's really nice to be able to see the progress from when they start until when they finish. There are some that don't make it through the program because they're not ready for that particular part of the training.

But by the end of that training, we get a list of individuals that we can employ, maybe not at my store, but it might be at one of the stores across town, or it could be at the Casey store, the Goodwill store, Fairway, the Cinema 16 Theater in town. What I look for out of this program is for them to learn the skills so they can take it and get employment somewhere.

I also have another passion that I got involved with. It's adaptive sports, and it's through Sportability of Iowa. It's given kids the opportunity to participate in sports, adaptive sports, wheelchair events. Before I got started on this, there were no adaptive chairs in Cedar Rapids. I thought that was kind of not very right, not fair.

Mr. IMPERATO. Explain what an adaptive chair is.

Mr. FRANK. A hand cycle. That's adaptive equipment. A basketball chair, a tennis chair. The wheels are angled so that they have more stability and they don't tip over.

We started doing these fundraiser basketball games and trying to raise some funds to get chairs into this area to benefit the youth, to benefit vets that come back, where they can participate, go to the Y and learn the skills that gives them some confidence to help them in employment.

I also have been involved with an adaptive sports camp at University of Northern Iowa, and this is where I met an individual, a young man. He's 18 now. He was introduced to adaptive sports through this camp, and all he was able to do was be like a manager for the high school team. But since he went to this camp, he now has three State titles in track events. He's the first high school student in the United States to compete in a State cross-country meet in the wheelchair division last year.

He would never have had that opportunity if he didn't go to that camp, and that's helped him in his life, it's helped him in his school, it's helped him have opportunities for possibly a 4-year degree and a scholarship at one of the colleges.

When you go to some camp like this, it's amazing when they give somebody an opportunity, and I'm trying to tie in the sports with employment because sports, you get social skills, you get problem-solving abilities, the ability to be an effective team member. I

mean, I've seen studies where they say sports, just anybody participating in a sport helps them become a better student.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to have a hand cycle and a racer chair available in the high school community for somebody to have that opportunity to be able to participate? As of right now, that's not the case. They have to apply for a grant. A lot of people apply for grants. Sometimes they don't get them. Maybe the school boosters can do a fundraiser and purchase a chair for that individual. But there's been a lot who have gone through school that haven't had that opportunity to be able to participate, and I would like to see something change in that.

People with disabilities need to add value to a business as an employee. Otherwise it isn't employment, it's a charity. Certainly it's nice to give a person with a disability a chance, but we want that opportunity to be sustainable. The paycheck must be earned, and people with disabilities have tremendous skill sets and capabilities. However, they may need supports and opportunities to acquire them or to demonstrate them.

Walgreens company has found great value in employing people with disabilities, and certainly in my store and in stores across Iowa we see the value and help develop it through partnerships, through groups like Goodwill of the Heartland and vocational rehabilitation.

This concludes my remarks. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Frank follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RON FRANK

Good morning Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and distinguished Senators. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today about a cause that I am passionate about.

My name is Ron Frank. I have been an employee at Walgreens for 27 years and have been a store manager for 20 years. My current position with Walgreens is Store Manager for the 29th Avenue store in Cedar Rapids, IA and Community Leader for stores in Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Mason City, and Waverly. I am here to tell you about employment of people with disabilities from my perspective as a retail store manager and community leader for Walgreens, a 112-year-old retail pharmacy chain that started with one store in Chicago. Walgreens has grown into the country's largest network to meet America's health and daily living needs, helping people Stay Well, Live Well, and Get Well. With almost 8,000 stores in all 50 States plus Puerto Rico, we are central to most of our Nation's communities and their healthcare needs. From day one, this company has valued employees and viewed them as the key asset of the company to achieve our goal of providing a superior customer experience.

With the ADA anniversary upon us, Walgreens understands the need for enhancing employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities.

Our company has a long history of employing people with disabilities and has focused on it as an intentional goal in the past 7 years. The committee is aware of the story of how our distribution centers are inclusive of people with disabilities from Walgreens senior vice president Randy Lewis' testimony before this committee last year.

My Walgreens store in Cedar Rapids, IA has pioneered efforts for enhancing employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities through programs partnering with Goodwill of the Heartland and with Sportability of Iowa.

My Walgreens store has been partnering with Goodwill of the Heartland to provide a job skills training program, allowing job seekers with disabilities to gain both classroom knowledge of the retail environment and job seeking skill development including real hands-on experience in a retail setting for the past 4 years. The Community Based Retail Training Program is an 8 week course offering retail skill development. Goodwill of the Heartland has a 120-hour curriculum combining classroom and sales floor experiences. Students learn from my staff by working with them in all aspects of the store including how to set-up a cash register drawer, ring

up a sale, and give correct change. Money handling skills include not only cash and coin, but also credit and other electronic cards, and check writing. These skills are taught in a classroom setting at my location and reinforced side-by-side with the Walgreens staff and customers. They learn how to do these jobs, not just by watching but by working on the registers, stocking the shelves, cleaning the store, and providing customer assistance. I meet individually with students to discuss and teach about what it takes to get a job and keep a job, from the application process and interviewing and keeping a job after they have been hired. The funding for this program comes from Vocational Rehabilitation. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation supports job seekers in this training to help determine their skills and job interests. The program began at my store almost 5 years ago and since then we have started the program in Waterloo, Waverly, Dubuque, Des Moines, West Des Moines, Iowa City and Ankeny in Iowa as well as in Fort Wayne, IN. Walgreens has opened its doors to people who typically experience barriers to employment by welcoming these job seekers and training them in today's world of work. Over 18 people have been hired at Walgreens in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area alone as a result of this training. Participants of the training program have also been hired as stockers, greeters and cashiers at Casey's General Store, Goodwill Stores, HyVee, Fareway, and Cinema 16 Theaters. My experience with this program has proven to be successful in offering opportunities to those with disabilities to gain the skills needed for employment as well as benefited the employees, the community, and Walgreens. People with disabilities are truly capable if given a solid program that not only supports them in gaining skills, but expects them to gain those skills.

Through Walgreens, I have also partnered with Sportability to give young people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in sporting activities. My store along with stores in Waterloo have organized and participated in wheelchair basketball fundraiser games at the local high schools in our communities. The games include both people with and without disabilities to increase awareness and provide funding for the adaptive sports equipment needed for youth with disabilities to have the same opportunities and benefits of sports as those without disabilities. As a community event with Walgreens, I have also volunteered at a week-long adaptive sports camp at the University of Northern Iowa. I have seen personally the looks on the faces of the youth who participate in sporting activities for the first time and it has impacted me on a personal level as well. On my own I started a program to raise money for the adaptive sports equipment needs by creating sponsorship packages for businesses. I am very passionate about sports being available for youth with disabilities, because I have seen firsthand the difference it can make in an individual's life *and* employment skills. A good example is a young man, now 18 years old, who was introduced to adaptive sports through the adaptive sports camp I have volunteered for. This young man was always interested in sports, but was only allowed to be a "manager" for teams at school. Since his first camp experience, 3 years ago, where he was introduced to many adaptive sports including track, he has earned a State title in three wheelchair track events and was the first high school student in the United States to compete in a State Cross Country meet in a wheelchair division last year. His confidence has blossomed in all areas in life and he currently has a part-time job and a possible opportunity for a scholarship at a 4-year college. He also participated in several job shadows in the community and a paid work assessment at my store through Systems Unlimited. His future is bright but without this opportunity to experience support and success in athletics along with he and his parents' dedication and determination to travel across the State to be able to participate in those opportunities; his future may look different today. Sporting opportunities in Iowa and across the country are limited for individuals with disabilities, partly because the lack of sporting equipment and that is something I am trying to change.

Young people with disabilities have limited opportunities to participate in group and individual sports due to schools', camps' and leagues' lack of adaptive equipment. Adapted sports participation provides an opportunity for young people with disabilities to become and stay physically fit and healthy. Later on sports benefit individuals with and without disabilities because the skills gained, such as social skills, problem solving ability, the ability to be an effective team member, along with an increase in self confidence, match some key skills needed for many gainful employment opportunities.

We can enhance employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities by ensuring that they have opportunities to learn skills that are marketable in today's labor force and have as many opportunities as possible to gain the soft skills that other youth get through athletics and intramural sports. Agencies, schools and other supports for students and young adults with disabilities must be aligned with local business needs. They must believe that their students and clients

can acquire the skills and manage the jobs that require those skills. These institutions must demonstrate the expectation that tomorrow's future disability leaders have the potential to add value to an employer as an employee, not as a charity. The best way to accomplish this is to have the agencies know how to and be able (and expected to) partner with business in their community to understand what is needed and establish the connections and knowledge to develop such skills. One of the reasons that my store's program is so successful is the relationship between myself and the leaders at Goodwill. They have asked good questions and responded to my feedback to ensure the program is robust and relevant.

At Walgreens, we believe that some of the things that can help are simple and some are more complicated. Very simply the expectation that people with disabilities can and will acquire skills and have supports to be competitive in today's workforce is the first step. Outcomes versus process are true indicators of the success of programs. Performance metrics should be high reaching and also assume that people with disabilities can and will compete with others in the job market as long as supports are provided. And finally the system should support the notion that companies can benefit from the contributions of people with disabilities within their operations. As long as the pipeline is filled with qualified candidates with disabilities, we can certainly ensure opportunities for them.

People with disabilities need to add value to a business as an employee, otherwise it isn't employment, it is charity. Certainly it is nice to give a person with a disability a chance, but if we want that opportunity to be sustainable, the paycheck must be earned. And it should be earned, people with disabilities can have tremendous skill sets and capabilities, however they may need supports and opportunities to acquire them or to demonstrate them. Across the Walgreen Company, we have found great value in employing people with disabilities, and certainly in my store, my community's stores, and in other Iowa stores we see that value and help develop it through partnerships with groups like Goodwill of the Heartland. Iowans with disabilities are definitely demonstrating their value and capability every day.

This concludes my prepared remarks, I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you and be well.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

As I said, what I've learned from Walgreens is that their bottom line actually improved with the employment of people with disabilities.

So now, please don't take any offense, but we saved the best for last.

[Laughter.]

Now we have three young people, part of what I call the ADA generation, who have wonderful stories to tell about what they've done and I think show what people can actually accomplish if they have high expectations for themselves and if we also have high expectations for them.

The first is Emilea Hillman.

Ms. HILLMAN. Emilea.

The CHAIRMAN. Emilea Hillman.

Ms. HILLMAN. There you go.

The CHAIRMAN. I'll just say Em, a 24-year-old woman who lives and works in Independence, IA. Her testimony focuses on her employment history.

Well, I'll tell you what, why should I read this? I'll let her tell the story.

[Laughter.]

All right, Em, welcome to the committee.

She is being assisted by her sister, Ashlee.

Ms. HILLMAN. Right here.

The CHAIRMAN. I met her before, yes. And your mother is here, too. I know that. I met her before, too.

Well, Em, go ahead, please.

STATEMENT OF EMILEA HILLMAN, INDEPENDENCE, IA

Ms. HILLMAN. Good morning. My name is Emilea Hillman, and I am the owner of Em's Coffee Company, Independence, IA. Thank you for asking me to speak today.

I graduated from Independence High School in 2007. I took classes with everyone else. In high school I volunteered, but wanted to work. I then went to work at sheltered workshop. I worked Monday through Friday from 8 to 3 and made $2.00 per hour. I worked there for 2 years.

I hung up clothes and I didn't get to talk to the customers. I like to talk. I am a chatterbug.

[Laughter.]

Shoot. OK. Where was I?

[Laughter.]

After a bad day at the sheltered workshop in February 2009, I quit. I did not work for 6 months, and I was upset. I love to work with the help of my family.

In just 10 months, I opened my own coffee shop and coffee company. I got a grant from voc rehab, and I had lots of help. WIPA helped make my business plan. It was hard work to open my business. I had to find a building for my espresso machine, a supplier of tables and chairs, even employees.

I went to ice cream school to learn how to scoop ice cream. I went to barista school to learn how to make drinks. My favorite drink to make is hot chocolate.

I made small changes to my barista machine to make it work for me. The cash register is right there. The cash register also has pictures on the top. The buttons also know what buttons so I know what to press when it rings up customers.

Everything is one quarter or a dollar. A latte is $3.25 drink. My coffee shop is making money, right?

[Applause.]

I have a job coach that helps me, and I have six employees. I employ people with and without disabilities and pay $7.25 per hour. I make drinks, run the cash register, and clean tables. I do dishes, and I talk to customers, and I know what they drink.

[Laughter.]

I sponsor my own Special Olympics. In October, I moved into my own home.

I love my coffee shop. I am the boss.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

Everyone should work. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hillman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EMILEA HILLMAN

Good morning, my name is Emilea Hillman and I am the owner of Em's Coffee Co. in Independence, IA. Thank you for asking me to speak today.

Before I get into the details, I would like you to know I am a young business owner, with a great work ethic. I am 24 years old and when I was born many doctors told my mom I would not walk, talk or even feed myself—let alone become an entrepreneur. I was born with Agenesis of the Corpus Collosum. What this means, is that my corpus collosum is absent. The corpus collosum is the connective tissue of nerve fibers that connects the right and left side of the brain. My corpus collosum is gone; therefore each side of my brain works independently. Some things that require both sides of your brain to communicate are riding a bike, driving a car and

even tying your shoes. I still learn things like everyone else; it just takes my brain a little bit longer.

I graduated from Independence High School in 2007. Throughout high school I participated in special education and was mainstreamed in class as much as possible; mainly for gym and choir. I started participating in Educational Based Career Education as a freshman where I gained experience at the local businesses such as Dairy Queen, the local nursing home and childcare facilities. I started earlier than most because my mom pushed the system. I would have liked to work while in high school or participate in internships, but those opportunities were not available.

After graduating from high school in May 2007, I went to work in a sheltered workshop, as that was the only option available after graduation. In Independence, there were little to no supported employment programs that could provide me opportunities to find competitive employment in the community. Individuals who experience disabilities were and still are expected to work at the segregated workshop in Independence. I worked at the workshop Monday through Friday 8 a.m.–3 p.m. hanging clothes. At the workshop I made around $2.50 per hour. After nearly 2 years of working in segregated employment, I had a really bad day at work in February 2009 and chose to quit—the workshop was no longer meeting my expectations. Though I made a lot of friends at the workshop, I did not build skills that would prepare me for working in the community. For example, I did not learn how to interact with customers. Instead, I was to work in the back room away from the customers.

After I quit at the sheltered workshop, I was unemployed for nearly 6 months while my family and I thought about employment opportunities for me. I decided I would start a coffee shop. Independence needed a coffee shop that would be welcoming to community meetings and sell a great cup of espresso. I knew I would like owning a coffee shop because I would be able to work with customers every day, whereas at the workshop I was not allowed to work with customers. I love working with people and the community on a daily basis. I'm a bit of a social butterfly.

It was difficult to start my own business as a lot went into it. There were some people that didn't think I could do it. I needed support to make it happen. I developed a business plan for my coffee shop with the support of my mom and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS). I then used my business plan to apply for grants through IVRS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I worked very closely with my local Work Incentive Planning and Assistance program (WIPA). WIPA was essential in supporting me to understand how I could own my own business and not lose my benefits. During the development period, I worked with my job coach to recover chairs we would use once the coffee shop opened, studied espresso drinks and researched pastries. My job coach also supported me in attending Barista School in Minnesota where I learned how to make espresso drinks. There we developed small accommodations for my espresso machine that would assist me in making drinks for future customers. Bottom line, I did everything anyone else would to open up their own coffee shop. After months of research, hard work and development, in December 2009, I opened up my business, Em's Coffee Co.

I currently employ six people at my coffee shop and I am an equal opportunity employer. I hire people with and without disabilities and pay at minimum wage. Em's Coffee Co. also sponsors our own Special Olympics team—we have a great group! I utilize Iowa's Consumer Choices Option (CCO) program, where I am able to cash in my Medicaid Waiver dollars and hire my own staff. I pay my job coaches through the CCO program. This allows me to choose my own staff. This has been very successful for me. Financially my coffee shop is doing well this year. I'm making a profit and projected to have a stable income in the future and become less reliant on benefits such as Supplemental Security Income. This has been an exciting year for me as I am becoming more independent in running my coffee shop every day, and in October, I will be celebrating 1 year in my own home.

It is hard for anyone to own their own business. I have my mom to support me with my business financials, my grandma is the head baker and I have great employees that work for me. I work at my coffee shop Monday through Friday from 6:30–2. Em's Coffee Co is open Monday through Friday from 8:30–5 and Saturdays from 7 o'clock–2. We sell specialty drinks, ice cream, Panini sandwiches and fresh baked goods.

I love my coffee shop and owning my own business. I know my customers by name and I know what they drink. I also have had the opportunity to present at multiple conferences throughout the country to share my story with others. I am a well-known member of the Independence Chamber of Commerce and a respected business owner in Independence. I assure you, everyone can work.

Thank you for your time.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. That was great.

Ms. HILLMAN. So here I have my pictures. Hang on, hang on. I'll stretch.

These are my flash cards. I did my grant cards on the top. That's cash register, my espresso machine. Those are the orange dots, and I think they help me. And on the bottom, over one, right there, that is a movie machine to make me one half, and on the bottom is espresso machine, decaf and the regular, and that one is my espresso machine, a small one, and two buttons are a big one.

Ms. LANTZ. Em makes small accommodations to be able to run the espresso machine.

The CHAIRMAN. You did that yourself? You modified it.

Ms. LANTZ. Yes, she did.

Ms. HILLMAN. Turn the other page. OK. Over there I steam milk, and Glen, my customer, he got me black and white chairs and a red couch.

Ms. LANTZ. She has a friend that works in the furniture store who helped her buy the furniture at cost so she could buy it cheaper.

Ms. HILLMAN. And on the bottom is Mary Butler.

Ms. LANTZ. That's one of her job coaches.

Ms. HILLMAN. Mom, I can't see.

And then over there I clean tables.

You have to turn. I can't see it. You read it. I can't.

Ms. LANTZ. "May all who enter as guests leave as friends," and our mom coined the line, "If you start with a second-hand business, you also treat people with disabilities as second-class citizens."

Ms. HILLMAN. Any questions?

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I don't know.

[Applause.]

I'm glad you showed that picture of you steaming milk because I like latte. So when I come there, you've got to make me a latte, OK?

Ms. HILLMAN. Any questions?

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Em, we might do it, but I'm going to have two other people speak, and then we'll come back. OK?

Ms. HILLMAN. All right.

The CHAIRMAN. OK. Now we're going to turn to Nate Trainor, a young adult with a disability who lives in Waverly, IA. His testimony focuses on the difference between the traditional expectations for young people with severe disabilities and his own life.

He lists the traditional aspects of a young disabled person's life as "segregated school, day program, group home, limited choice and control." By contrast, Trainor attended an inclusive school, went on to attend college, works and volunteers in the community, lives in a duplex with two friends his own age. He also hires his own staff, which gives him control over his own personal care. Trainor's testimony also mentions the positive impact that the Consumer Choice Option has had on his life.

I'm told he uses augmented communication to speak and ask that his testimony be presented as a PowerPoint, and then he can

respond to questions. Nate is being assisted by his friend. Is it Vanessa?

Ms. SYMMONDS. Vanessa.

The CHAIRMAN. Vanessa.

Nate volunteers for Vanessa's classroom, I'm told.

Ms. SYMMONDS. Yes. I teach 5th grade.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Nate, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF NATE TRAINOR, WAVERLY, IA

Ms. SYMMONDS. This is Nate Trainor, and everything on this PowerPoint are all his words. He communicates with this facilitative communication board, and I'm just going to read it on his behalf.

His shirt said, "You're not the boss of me."

[Laughter.]

"I live in my own duplex. I live with awesome friends, free from dear mom."

[Laughter.]

"We are friends. We go places, rent movies, have a beer, and they treat me as an easy friend."

"I am very awesome and busy. I work at the W, volunteer at a school and church, present, go to stores, exercise, and see lots of people. I like to eat at restaurants, read easy books on disability and FC, swim in my pool, fast go-carts, and ride in my 'feel-free' convertible."

Mr. IMPERATO. What's FC?

The CHAIRMAN. What is FC?

Ms. SYMMONDS. FC is facilitated communication. That's how he types and how he communicates, just this keyboard.

The CHAIRMAN. What's the W? The Y?

Ms. SYMMONDS. Yes, the Y at Warwick College.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, OK. Got it.

Ms. SYMMONDS. "I like adventure. Sea World is my best vacation. Mom lets me choose my destinations."

There at the bottom he's swimming with dolphins at Sea World.

"I want people to know my body movements are hard. The reason, I don't know. I have to tell my feet to move, and then they will. Yelling at me doesn't make them move any faster. I also don't look directly at things, but I still see them. Saying that I'm not looking is an incompetent thing to tell me."

"My voice is trapped deep down inside. It wants me to come out in words, but it is also only noise. I can control it, but it's very hard. Putting your hand over my mouth and telling me to be quiet doesn't help at all. But bribing me with chocolates might."

[Laughter.]

"One more thing. My ears work fine. They are not deaf just because I can't talk. I laugh when people raise their voice to talk to me."

"My hands are twisted and they are able to go forward but not backward. I need a facilitator to help. I think I could play piano."

On the left is traditional, and on the right is what Nate did. Segregated school; he went to an inclusive school. A day program; he went to a college. Another day program; he had a job. Another day program; he volunteered. A group home; and he lives in a duplex

with roommates. Staff provided; he hires his own staff. Limited communication; he has supported typing. Limited choice and control; he has more choice and control.

"Consumer Choice Options is an awesome program. When I get to be included doing fun things with my friends, the respect I feel is awesome."

"I believe no one wants to be a project. This is a sad best friend reason. Everyone wants easy friends. Real friends take the time to get to know someone. True friends are not fearful of me. People try to be respectful but sometimes fear the unknown."

"Don't waste your dreams. Treat them with respect. Communication is an awesome way to establish your dreams."

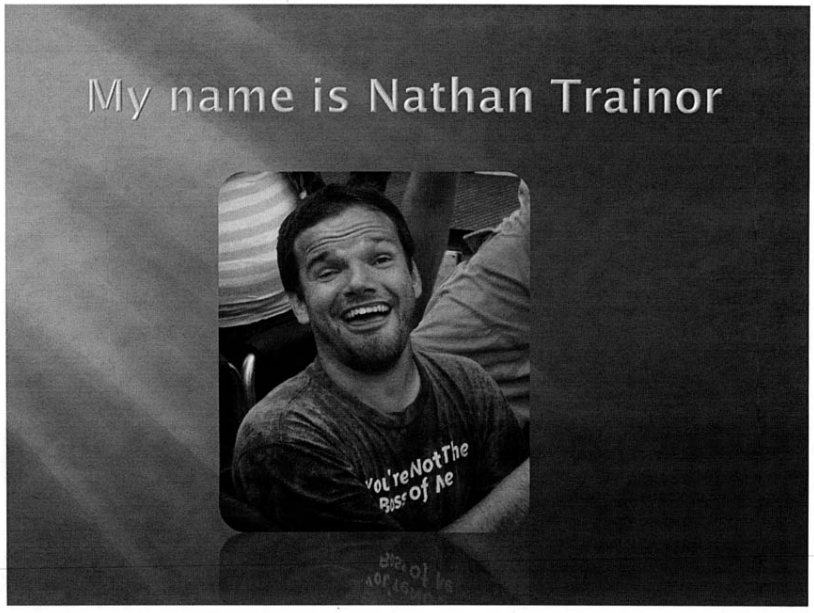
And here is his quote.

> "Freedom is respect, and this can only happen when people weigh the consequences away from themselves long enough to take the time to see I am here."—Nate Trainor.

[Applause.]

[The prepared (powerpoint) statement of Mr. Trainor follows:]

PREPARED (POWERPOINT) STATEMENT OF NATHAN TRAINOR

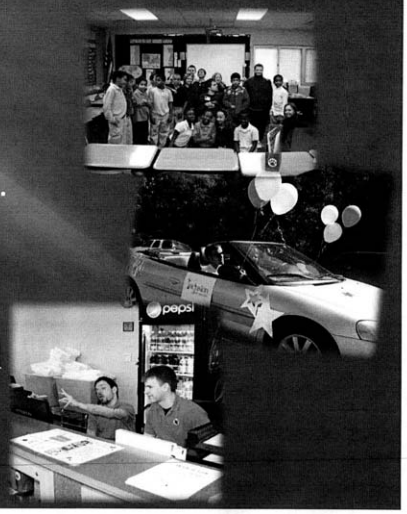


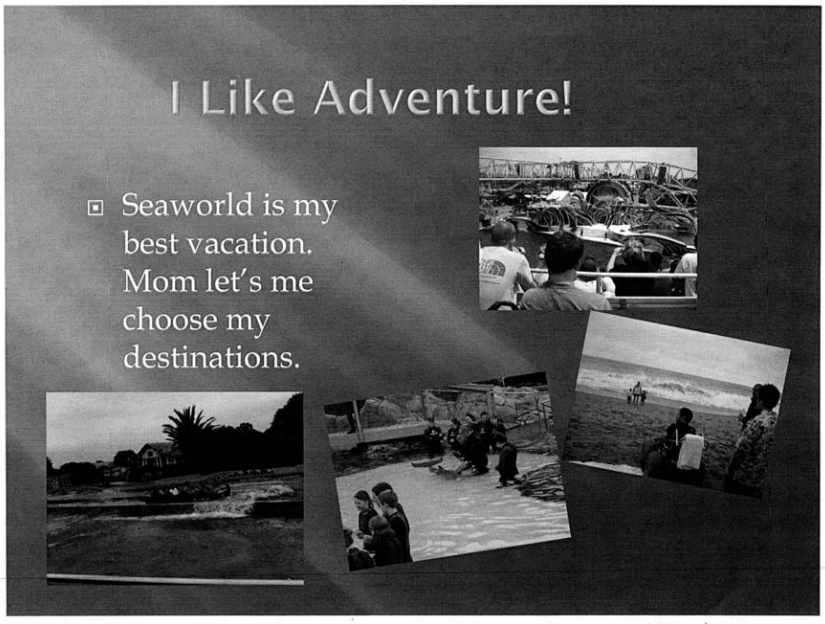
I Live In My Own Duplex

I live with awesome friends free from dear mom. We are friends; we go places, rent movies, have a beer – they treat me as an easy friend.

I Am Very Awesome and Busy

- I work at the "W", volunteer at a school and church, present, go to stores, exercise and see lots of people.
- I like to eat at restaurants, read easy books on disability and FC, swim in my pool, fast go-karts and ride in my "feel free" convertible.





I Want People to Know

My body movements are hard. The reason, I don't know.

I have to tell my feet to move and then they will. Yelling at me doesn't make them move any faster. I also don't look directly at things but I still see them.

Saying that I am not looking, is a incompetent thing to tell me.

My voice is trapped deep down inside, it wants to come out in words, but it is only noise. I can control it, but its very hard. Putting your hand over my mouth and telling me to be quiet doesn't help at all, but bribing me with chocolates might.

One more thing, my ears work fine. They are not deaf just because I can't talk. I laugh when people raise their voice to talk to me.

My hands are twisted and they are able to go forward but not backwards.

I need a facilitator to help. I think I could play piano.

Traditional vs. Nate's

Traditional	Nate
Segregated School.....	Inclusive School
Day Program.....	College
Day Program.....	Job
Day Program.....	Volunteer
Group Home.....	Duplex with roommates
Staff Provided.....	Hire own staff
Limited Communication.....	Supported typing
Limited choice and control.....	More choice and control

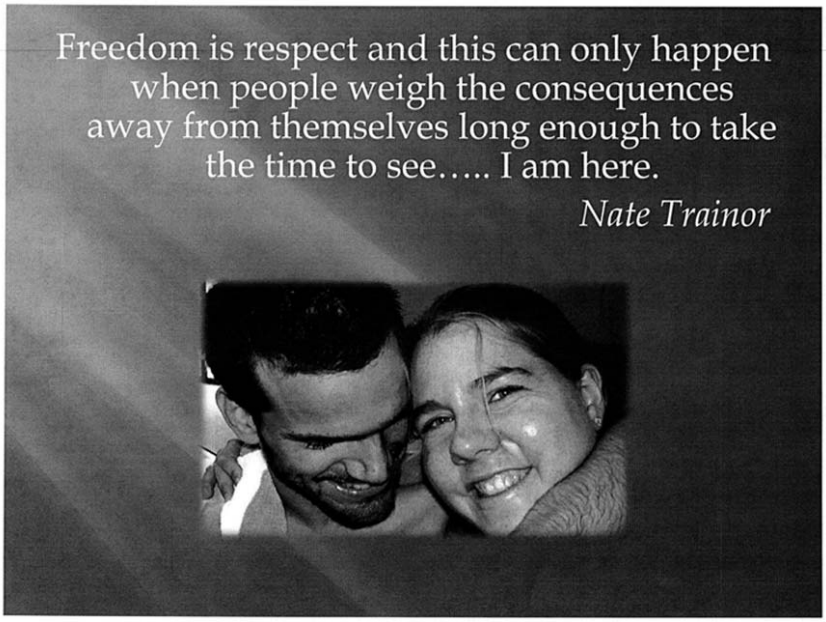
Consumer Choices Option

"Awesome Program"

"When I get to be included doing fun things with my friends the respect I feel is awesome."

I Believe…..

- No one wants to be a project, this is a sad best friend reason.
- Everyone wants easy friends.
- Real friends take the time to get to know someone.
- True friends are not fearful of me.
- People try to be respectful but sometimes fear the unknown.



The CHAIRMAN. Pretty awesome.

Ms. SYMMONDS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Nate. We'll get back to you with some questions maybe.

Next we have Alex Watters. He focuses on his accomplishments, as well as the challenges he has faced as a young adult with an acquired disability. Mr. Watters became a quadriplegic after a diving accident in Lake Okoboji in 2004. Since his accident, Alex has graduated summa cum laude from Morningside College, with a major in political science and a minor in global history. He earned a Master's degree in negotiation and dispute resolution from Creighton University in Omaha. However, he has had difficulty finding employment in spite of his skills and qualifications. He was recently hired to a full-time job with Organizing for America here in Iowa.

Watters concludes his testimony with a discussion of the current challenges to people with disabilities seeking to live independently. The one thing that I read about in his testimony is that he found it difficult to move from one State to another in terms of retaining necessary services and supports because of the differences in States.

Alex, welcome. Your statement will be made a part of the record, and please proceed.

STATEMENT OF ALEX WATTERS, MILFORD, IA

Mr. WATTERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Senator. I don't know how I'm going to follow those two. I didn't bring a lovely assistant or a PowerPoint.

[Laughter.]

I'm kind of sweating up here.

[Laughter.]

But I thank you very much for this opportunity to be here to speak today.

If you had met me 8 years ago, you would have thought I was one of the most active high school seniors that you'd ever met. I participated in the debate team and was captain of the golf team. During the summer I held down two jobs and enjoyed wake boarding with my friends and spending time on the water.

I was excited to begin college. I was on a golf scholarship to play at Morningside College, where I had hoped to study business and eventually own my own golf course as a teaching pro.

Two weeks into my freshman year I returned home to Okoboji with a couple of friends that I had met at Morningside for a family reunion that they were attending. After we spent some time around the campfire, we decided we wanted to go swimming one last time before the weather turned colder.

Once I had walked out on the dock approximately 150 paces, a gust of wind blew my hat off into the water. Thinking I was far enough from shore, I dove in, hoping to retrieve it. I would find out later that the water was only 18 inches deep. My head struck the bottom and my neck simply snapped.

I was life-flighted back to Sioux City, where I would have surgery to stabilize my neck. I went to Craig Hospital in Denver for rehabilitation over the next 6 months, dealing with everything from pressure sores to more surgeries and learning to identify myself as a quadriplegic.

Although my stature has changed, my drive and passion to be involved and active has not. Upon returning home from rehab, I

knew I was not going to let this injury become what defined me. I wanted to go back to school, and the sooner, the better. I returned home in April 2005, and by May I was signed up for classes, both for the summer and the fall.

In August I returned to Morningside College, where I had hoped to continue studying business and possibly continue pursuing the dream of owning my own golf course. However, after a few courses I realized that my heart was no longer set on that dream. I knew that I needed to do more, something that I felt would impact society in some way.

Once I took a political science course in college, I was hooked. I went on to serve as the student advocate of my college, president of the Morningside Democrats, and vice president of my fraternity, Delta Sigma Phi. In addition to the many exciting events I was a part of, I also managed to graduate in 4 years, as Senator Harkin said, summa cum laude, with a major in political science and a minor in global history.

After graduating, I decided to pursue a Master's degree in negotiation and dispute resolution from Creighton University in Omaha, NE. After receiving my Master's degree, I felt confident but at a loss for what the next step would be. I then learned of an internship with the American Association of People with Disabilities in Washington, DC. I immediately applied and was selected as an intern for them for the summer of 2011.

That summer was amazing. The experiences I had and the people I met were truly life-changing. I was working with the U.S. Department of Education, as well as the AAPD. I was able to meet a vast array of inspiring and very motivating individuals.

Following the internship, I struggled to find full-time employment. My dreams of staying in Washington, DC quickly faded. I ended up moving home, where I helped my former coach with our local debate team. I was also able to continue traveling around the State, speaking to groups of young people about pursuing their dreams.

However, although I applied for what seems like countless work opportunities, I couldn't seem to land a job. I don't know if it was some type of discrimination or a tight labor market, but it was very frustrating. I was finally contacted by a member of Organizing for America, the President's grassroots team here in Iowa, and after having job opportunities that felt like a correct fit fall through, I was hesitant to put my faith in this opportunity.

However, as luck would have it, I ended up landing the job and work there today. I cannot begin to tell you how inspired I am by our President, so fighting for his reelection is something that I'm proud to do.

I couldn't have gotten where I am today without a lot of support from wonderful people. I'm grateful to my family. My mother was able to be here with me today. I'm grateful to those people in my life, my vocational rehabilitation counselor, and the many professors and advisors that have inspired me and encouraged me to reach for my dreams. I am also thankful for those who had set things in motion long before I became a member of the disability community. I am grateful to you, Senator Harkin, for your hard

work on the Americans with Disabilities Act that made school and work opportunities accessible to me.

And while it is not my intention to run down the list of my accomplishments since my injury, I believe it should be seen as a testament of how a piece of legislation can truly enable individuals to spread their wings when given the same opportunities that others take for granted. However, we can do better. While I feel there have been many successes in the system along my journey, there have also been frustrations that must be addressed.

One of the greatest struggles that I had in my transition to graduate school was my transition to graduate school. You see, I live on the border of Iowa and wanted to attend an esteemed college in Omaha, NE. Looking at the difficulty I had while moving to Nebraska, you would have thought that Iowa and Nebraska were two separate countries rather than bordering States.

In order for me to live in Omaha, I needed to cancel all of the services I was receiving in Iowa and open an account in Nebraska. Once I did that, I was able to receive care in Nebraska, but I was not able to easily return home to visit my family due to the lack of care in Iowa.

While I understand and respect that State programs are their own, I feel that we must begin functioning as a United States of America, thus allowing individuals with disabilities to freely travel and receive education wherever they so desire without paying the price of being unable to return home from time to time.

Also while in graduate school, I realized just how inadequate public transportation can be. Throughout my practicum, I relied heavily on my boss to pick me up from work daily so that I could complete my degree. Omaha's paratransit system explained to me that I was out of their range as far as ADA-required transportation. And although I recognize that Omaha is a growing and expansive city, there must be better options for individuals with disabilities who are attempting to be a productive part of society by joining the workforce. If they have the passion and the ability to land a job, the very least we can do is make sure that we can give them a ride to get there.

Another thing that is a great challenge for disabled individuals is access to adequate care. One of the things that the Americans with Disabilities Act and the independent living movement fought to ensure was that individuals would not have to be institutionalized solely because they have a disability. However, adequate care in more rural areas continues to be a problem to this day. It wasn't until I moved back to Okoboji following my internship last summer that I realized just how trying it can be to find day to day care. My family was able to fill in where the care agency was not, but this is not the case for all people with disabilities, some of whom have to support families of their own. A single mom that I know in the area was forced not only to deal with her new injury as a quadriplegic, but also worrying about trying to raise a child without reliable in-home care.

Finally, we need to do better by our individuals with disabilities as far as jobs are concerned. Although I recognize that we have come a great way with the introduction of reasonable accommodations, meaningful employment continues to be scarce for individ-

uals with disabilities. A talent pool is simply stagnant due to the overwhelming obstacles in their way, and I must say it's very inspiring listening to Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Shults today and hearing about programs setting these in place.

Eight years ago, I had hopes of being a professional golfer. However, since that time, my plans and hopes for the future have continually changed. I have, as I find it ever so important, continued pushing forward. I think it is difficult for anyone to try to shift their career focus, but for individuals with disabilities, it can be very troubling. It was not as if I simply put away my golf clubs and learned a new trade. It was my attempt to find out what I could do in the workplace, combined with what I enjoy doing.

However, since I began my internships and more recently my job, I have noticed just how many challenges I have simply in performing my daily tasks. These are things that individuals of a similar age without a disability may never think of. Everyday tasks such as picking up my papers from the printer or filling out a form can be a great struggle with me. And also with the lack of adaptive technology within the workplace, or even doors not being wide enough to get through, can keep me from being successful in my workplace.

The good news is that I believe we're starting to see a shift in the consciousness of the public, as well as employers surrounding those with disabilities. My current employer has made sure that there's an open line of communication for all of my accommodations and my needs as an employee. For that, I am grateful and hopeful, hopeful that this job can simply act as a stepping stone, and perhaps someday I may even have the opportunity of representing the great people of Iowa.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Watters follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ALEX WATTERS

Good morning, my name is Alex Watters and I am very happy to have this opportunity to be here speaking before all of you today.

If you had met me 8 years ago you would've thought that I was one of the most active seniors in high school that you ever met. In fact, my mom often joked that she rarely if ever saw me. I was very active on both the debate team as well as captain of the golf team my junior and senior year. Growing up in the beautiful resort area of Okoboji, during the summer I held down two jobs and managed to have some fun wake boarding with my friends and spending time on the water.

In 2004 I was anxious to begin my adventure of going to College, I was on a golf scholarship to play at Morningside College where I had hoped to study business and eventually own my own golf course as a teaching pro. However, 2 weeks into my freshman year I returned home to Okoboji with a couple of friends that I had met at Morningside for a family reunion that they were attending. After we had spent time around the campfire, we decided that we wanted to go swimming one last time before the weather turned colder. While the girls were in changing, I went out onto the dock with the little brother. Once we had walked out on the dock approximately 150 paces, a gust of wind took the hat right off my head and blew it into the water. Thinking that I was next to a boat hoist and far from shore, I simply slipped off my T-shirt and dove in, hoping to retrieve it.

I would find out later that the water was only 18 inches deep. At the time I was approximately 6'1", 210 pounds and my neck simply snapped.

I was life-flighted back to Sioux City where I would have surgery to stabilize my neck. I would later go to Craig Hospital in Denver for rehabilitation over the next 6 months, dealing with everything from pressure sores, more surgeries and learning to identify myself as a quadriplegic.

Although my stature has changed, my drive and passion to be involved and active has not. Upon returning home from rehab, I knew that I was not going to let this injury become what defined me. I knew that I wanted to go back to school, the soon-

er the better! To that end, after returning home in April 2005, by that May I was signed up for classes both for the summer and the fall.

In August I returned to Morningside College where I had hoped to continue studying business and possibly continue to pursue the dream of owning my own golf course. However, after a few courses I realized that my heart was no longer set on that dream. I knew that I needed to do more, something that I felt would impact society in some way.

In high school I had always loved being in debate and my senior year I had actually been selected as a page in the Iowa House of Representatives, so once I took a political science course in college I was hooked. Throughout college I was involved in many different activities and on many different boards, some of which may even coincide with your college experience, Senator Harkin. I served as the student advocate of my college, president of the Morningside Democrats as well as vice president for two terms within my fraternity Delta Sigma Phi. In addition to the many events and activities I was a part of, I managed to graduate in 4 years summa cum laude with a major in political science and minoring in global history.

However, nearing graduation I still had no idea what I wanted to do for a career. In fact when individuals would ask me what I wanted to do after college, my mantra continually seemed to be "change the world". I simply hoped that by the time I graduated I would know how I was going to make that happen and exactly what those changes would encompass.

Having studied political science and global history over the last 4 years, to say that I was appalled by bloodshed, war and the lack of good communication would be an understatement. One day while reading my textbook I stumbled across a Masters program that intrigued me. I began looking for programs near me and 2 years later graduated with my masters in negotiation and dispute resolution from Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

After receiving my masters I felt confident, but at a loss for what the next step would be. It wasn't until I reached out to a colleague from a previous internship during my undergraduate days that I learned of an internship with the American Association of People with Disabilities. I immediately applied and later found out that I had been selected for an internship with them in Washington, DC for the summer of 2011. To say that summer was amazing would, again, be a huge understatement. The experiences I had and the people I met were life changing! Working with the U.S. Department of Education, as well as the AAPD, I was able to meet a vast array of inspiring and motivating individuals.

Following the internship I struggled to find full-time employment. My dreams of staying in Washington, DC quickly faded. I ended up moving home where I helped my former coach with our local debate team. I was also able to continue traveling around the State speaking to groups of young people.

After applying for what felt like countless job opportunities, I was contacted by a member of Organizing for America, the President's grass roots team here in Iowa. After having job opportunities that felt like the correct fit fall through, I was hesitant to put my faith in this opportunity. However, as luck would have it I landed the job and work there today. I cannot begin to tell you how inspired I am by our President, so fighting for his re-election is something that I am proud to do.

I couldn't have gotten where I am today without a lot of support from wonderful people. First and foremost my family; they have always been there to inspire me, pat me on the back and push me when I needed it. The incredible caregivers that have helped make my day to day life possible—and also those advocates who set things in motion long before I became a member of the disability community. You, Senator Harkin, for your hard work on the Americans With Disabilities Act that made these opportunities accessible to me. My vocational rehabilitation counselor for giving me resources when I needed them and assisting me with the college process. The many professors and advisers that have inspired me and encouraged me to reach for my dreams.

And while it is not my intention to run down the list of my accomplishments since my injury, I believe it should be seen as a testament to how a piece of legislation can truly enable individuals to spread their wings when given the same opportunities that others take for granted.

However, we can do better!!!

While I feel there have been many successes in the system along my journey, there have also been frustrations that must be addressed. One of the first great struggles that I had was my transition to graduate school.

You see, I live on the border of Iowa and wanted to attend an esteemed college in Omaha, NE, you would have thought they were separate countries instead of bordering states.

In order for me to live in Omaha and receive services there, I would need to cancel all of the services I was receiving in Iowa and open an account in Nebraska. Once I did that, I was able to receive care in Nebraska, but I was not able to easily return home to visit my family since I was no longer eligible for care in Iowa. While I understand and respect that the State programs are their own, I feel we must begin functioning as the United States of America and allow individuals with disabilities to freely travel and receive education wherever they so desire without paying the price of being unable to return home from time to time.

Also while in graduate school, I realized just how inadequate public transportation can be. Throughout my practicum, I relied on my boss to come and pick me up for work daily so that I could complete my degree. I checked with Omaha's paratransit system and they explained to me that I was outside of the required area for them to provide transportation under the ADA. Although I recognize that Omaha is a growing and expansive city, there has to be better options for individuals with disabilities who want to be productive members of the workforce. If they have the passion and the ability to land a job, the very least we can do is make sure that they can get a ride there.

Another great challenge for disabled individuals is access to adequate care. One of the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act is to ensure that individuals will not be institutionalized solely because they have a disability; this was one of the priorities at the start of the independent living movement. However, adequate care in more rural areas continues to be a problem to this day. It wasn't until I moved back to Okoboji following my internship last summer that I realized just how trying it can be to find day to day care. While my family was able to fill in where the agency care was not, a single mom that I know in the area was forced not only to deal with her new injury as a quadriplegic, but also worry about trying to raise a child without reliable in home care.

Finally, we need to do better by our individuals with disabilities as far as jobs are concerned. Although I recognize that we have made good progress with reasonable accommodations and equal employment, meaningful employment continues to be scarce for many individuals with disabilities. A talent pool is sitting stagnant due to the overwhelming obstacles in their way.

Eight years ago I had hopes of being a professional golfer; however, since that time my plans and hopes for the future have continually changed. I have, as I find it to be ever so important, continued pushing forward. I think it is difficult for anyone to try to shift their career focus, but for individuals with disabilities it can be very troubling. It was not as if I simply put away my golf clubs and learned a new trade. It was my attempt to find out what I could do in the workplace, combined with what I enjoy doing.

However, since I began my internships and more recently my job, I have noticed just how many challenges I have simply in performing my daily tasks. These are things an individual similar in age, without a disability, may never think of. Everyday tasks, such as picking up my papers from the printer, or filling out a form can be a great struggle for me. Also the lack of having adaptive technology within the workplace, or even doors that aren't wide enough for me to get through, can keep me from being successful in my workplace.

The good news is that I believe we are starting to see a shift in the consciousness of the public, as well as employers, surrounding those disabilities. My current employer has made sure that there is an open line of communication for all of my accommodations and needs as an employee. For that I am grateful, and hopeful. Hopeful, that this job can simply act as a steppingstone, and perhaps someday I may even have the opportunity of representing the great people of Iowa.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

[Applause.]

Thank you very much, Alex. You know, we have a quadriplegic who is a Congressman, Ron Langevin from——

Mr. IMPERATO. Jim Langevin.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Or Jim Langevin from Rhode Island. He does a great job.

You aren't after my job right now, are you?

[Laughter.]

Mr. WATTERS. I wasn't trying to push you out or anything.

[Laughter.]

I'm just ready to step in.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I think we met once before. We met last year sometime.

Mr. WATTERS. We met during the summer when I was in Washington.

The CHAIRMAN. That's right, that's right. I remember now. I tell you, you remind me a lot of my nephew.

I shouldn't tell personal stories, but my nephew, a strapping, big kid like you, 19 years old, decided to go in the Navy. I was a Navy pilot. He wanted to serve on an aircraft carrier, which he did. Nineteen years old, big kid, my sister's boy. Nineteen years old, 1978, got sucked down the intake of a jet engine, broke his neck, became quadriplegic. They sent him back to California, the VA hospital there, and then went to Craig because he's from Colorado. That was 1978.

If my brother Frank got me really interested in disability policy, it was my nephew who really propelled me into looking at the barriers that were out there, because he then wanted to go to school, couldn't get his wheelchair anywhere. We didn't have curb cuts in the 1980s. He went to Colorado State in Fort Collins, and it was just hard to even get—some classes he couldn't take because he couldn't get to the class. That was an eye-opener to me.

And then he just persevered. Thank God for the Veterans Administration. They were wonderful. But, how old is Kelly now? He must be in his fifties, I guess. But he went on to start his own business, to live by himself all his life, got married, adopted a couple of kids. He's done incredible things, incredible things.

He liked to boat, and he wanted to be independent. So he rigged up a device. He bought a boat, a motor boat, and he rigged up a crane, and he could get out there in his wheelchair, and he had this crane. He'd push these buttons and this thing would come down. It would get under his wheelchair and pick him up. It just took my breath away to watch him do this and set him in the boat. I thought, my God, what if this thing breaks? I'm just saying——

Mr. WATTERS. My mom is cringing as you're telling this story.

[Laughter.]

My wheels are turning, she's cringing.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. And every time I visit him, what he's done with his house and how he's made it—it's amazing.

I'd just say that, you can have a great life, things are so different now in just accessibility and mobility and getting around and things like that. I know how he's lived his life, and I have no doubt that you're going to do whatever you want to do in life, Alex. So keep pushing ahead.

Thank you all very, very, very much. These were great testimonies.

The one question I have, Em, for you is, in your own words tell me what's the best thing about owning your own business? What do you like about owning your own business?

Mr. IMPERATO. What's your favorite thing to do when you're at work? You like making hot chocolate. Anything else?

Ms. HILLMAN. Yes, I do, because——

The CHAIRMAN. Em, let me ask you this. Do you like going to work?

Ms. HILLMAN. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. So you look forward to it?

Ms. HILLMAN. I get up at 6, 6 o'clock every morning.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Every morning.

Mr. IMPERATO. Do you drink coffee?

Ms. HILLMAN. [Shakes head.]

[Laughter.]

But my sister does.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Em, I have actually heard from people I know in Independence who say they love to go into your shop because you brighten their day, you just make people feel good. You always have a smile and, as one person said, you're a real personality.

[Laughter.]

I think that's good. But 6 o'clock every morning? Well, I don't know about that.

[Laughter.]

Nate, one of the things you said is you like living with roommates. So what do you like about that, living with roommates?

[Pause.]

Ms. SYMMONDS. Can we get back to it?

The CHAIRMAN. OK, sure. Why don't I go to Ron? I wanted to ask Ron something. Go ahead and continue, Nate.

I wanted to ask Ron, what do you think we can do to encourage other Iowa businesses to make a similar commitment to hiring people with disabilities? I have a sense that when I talk to business people, they'd like to do it but, well, they're afraid of a lot of things—bottom line, liability, this, that—legitimate worries that business people might have, and a lot of our small business owners, like Em, are just busy. I mean, they're busy all day. They're working at their businesses.

How do we encourage and how do we bring people together on this in expanding these opportunities in businesses around Iowa?

Mr. FRANK. From what I've seen, part of it is fear. Part of it is fear, like you mentioned, of the unknown, the uncomfortableness, or they might look at it as a charity, and what can I do, how much time is it going to take out of my business to do this if they look at it as a charity.

Working with vocational rehabilitation, I think, and getting with businesses and showing them some success stories, and making sure that the agencies have everything in line as far as what they can do for that business. If they're going to approach a business and they don't know what they're going to do or what job skills they're going to give this business, it's not going to work. So they have to have their ducks in a row, and they need to be organized, and they need to show, here, this is what we're going to do for you.

They will see the benefit. I've seen the benefit for 5 years, and it's very amazing.

The CHAIRMAN. You also addressed yourself to the importance of what I was talking to David about, and that's getting kids in high

school, getting them some summer jobs and work experiences and internships. You also spoke about the importance of that, too.

Mr. FRANK. Well, it gives them some confidence, and it gives them some skill sets that will help them get employed.

The CHAIRMAN. I would just say this again for the record. I've said it many times. You think, with all the years I've worked in disability issues, you'd think I'd know it all, but I don't. So what really alarmed me, what really came home to me was when this event happened at Atalissa, at the turkey plant, and we found a lot of issues, but one thing was we found people with intellectual disabilities working right alongside people without disabilities, and they're getting paid $1 an hour or something, and the people without disabilities are getting paid $10 an hour, and they're doing the same work. I said, wait, this can't be right.

Then we started looking at the whole issue of sheltered workshops. I kind of grew up in that era of sheltered workshops. And then it occurred to me that there are a lot of people working in sheltered workshops that go in there and they just are—that's it. They're just dead in there. They don't get any more skill sets. They aren't provoked to do different things.

That's why we have worked, in the Workforce Investment Act reauthorization, which one of these days we'll get, to get more involvement for VR early, in high schools and stuff like that, to begin to move these young people into competitive employment, so that sheltered employment is not the first option but it would be the last. In other words, let's see what you can do in competitive employment.

I've got to tell you, when I first brought this up and talked about it, people said, "Well, you know, you're going to set up some of these kids to fail because they just can't do competitive employment." I said, "Well, you know, I treat kids with disabilities just like I treat other kids." Sometimes you need to get a kick in the pants, you know? And people thought I was being harsh.

I don't think I was being harsh. I'm just saying you've got to have high expectations, and we have to let them know we have high expectations of them. Then they get high expectations. Sure, is everyone going to succeed at a certain competitive employment? No, but that's life. We all fail at one thing or another. I didn't start out to be this in my lifetime either.

But the idea being to prepare these young people for competitive, integrated employment, because we've seen it work. Will there be some who absolutely can't? Probably, but that shouldn't be the first option. The first option should be competitive, integrated employment, not at sub-standard wages either, but at full wages.

So that's hopefully the direction we're moving in, and I take it that's where you want to see us go also, right?

Let's see, I was going to come back to Vanessa and Nate.

Ms. SYMMONDS. He says he gets to see his friends.

The CHAIRMAN. What?

Ms. SYMMONDS. He gets to see friends.

The CHAIRMAN. You get to see your friends, yes, without being isolated.

Mr. IMPERATO. Social networking.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, social networking.

The CHAIRMAN. I wanted to ask Nate if he likes movies. Nate, do you like movies?

While Nate is answering that, David or Richard, do you have anything to add that kind of comes to mind or anything like that? If not, that's fine.

Anybody else over here?

One of the things I also like to do at these hearings is, I would like to open it if anyone in the audience has anything that they want to say or add, or a question for one of the panelists, or for me. I'll try to do that, but I must tell you that this is an official hearing, so you have to tell us your name, and you have to spell it so our court reporter can get it accurately.

Mr. IMPERATO. Tamara has the mic.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, Tamara has the mic. So we'll start here, then we'll go to this gentleman right back here.

Yes?

Ms. CLARK. My name is Cherie Clark, C-h-e-r-i-e C-l-a-r-k.

The CHAIRMAN. Got it.

Ms. CLARK. First let me thank you, Senator Harkin, for being here. And, Andy, thank you for coming back to be with Senator Harkin. We love AAPD, but we also love Senator Harkin. Thank you for coming back.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

I also want to thank the panelists.

But I have a question for the two panelists over here, and it's kind of a question for both of these gentlemen.

David, you said that you wanted to eliminate the diagnosis. That wasn't your exact word, but that was kind of the intent that you were saying. And Richard, you said that you are big on peer support for people with mental illnesses.

We know that peer support is very important for people with all kinds of disabilities, and there just hasn't been that emphasis on peer support for the broader disability community. And in order to have that broader emphasis, we cannot lose that identity of who we are as individuals with a disability. I'm just afraid that if you take away my CP as an employee, I'm not going to be able to connect with my peer here and there and wherever they are out there in the real world. For me, that's a concern.

The CHAIRMAN. Richard or David?

Mr. MITCHELL. Thank you, Cherie. I think your work with advocacy and the listserv really helps the State of Iowa also. So I want to express acknowledgement of that, too.

I made a comment to Mr. Shults as Nate was talking about his story about the importance of inclusion and integration, and I think it tied in very well with Rick's efforts talking about peer support.

Our efforts, as I talked about the labeling, was to move away from the perceptions that labels cause to really look at the individual's abilities and interests and preferences, and certainly not to take away from any of the social networking and peer-support efforts that occur daily with that movement. So the effort is to look at individuals' abilities and preferences and skills and learning styles, and not let the disability drive that process.

Mr. SHULTS. And from our perspective, we use a term in our office quite frequently where we talk about both/and, where you can get the combination, getting away from the stigma and getting away from the labels, but also have that kind of additional support. There isn't any reason why it has to be one way or the other. It can be both/and. The idea of expanding peer support—and one of the things I'm pleased to be able to do in Iowa is where we talk about mental health and disability services becoming an umbrella and being able to cover that whole span.

The areas we're looking at is expanding peer support in other areas, and in particular one of the areas I'd like us to be working on is peer support for youth. That's another area where often getting peer support from an individual that's 36 years old may be different from someone who is your own age. So those are the kinds of things that we need to be looking forward to.

The CHAIRMAN. This gentleman back here. Oh, there was a gentleman over here that had a—oh, I'm sorry. Kim has that.

Mr. WRIGHT. Yes, my name is Adam Wright, W-r-i-g-h-t. I'm from Cedar Rapids here, and I do want to thank the panelists and the Senator for holding this hearing today.

I've actually got two different questions.

No. 1, I'm a person that's very active in the community who has a diagnosis of Asperger's. I just recently did an internship with Congressman Loebsack, and I'm going back to school to get my B.A. in political science in my thirties.

My first question involves the PPACA, and it has to do with the fact that right now a lot of people with mild disabilities seek SSDI benefits due to the fact that they cannot get—for the Medicaid or the Medicare benefits that go along with that, to treat their disabilities. Will the PPACA allow more people with mild disabilities to enter the competitive workforce due to the fact that they will be able now to seek private health benefits to care for their disabilities?

My second question has to do with we talk about folks with disabilities entering the workforce, but I hear very little conversation about sustaining that employment. I've often run into experiences where I have been able to get a job, but unfortunately it only lasts maybe 3 to 5 years for various reasons, issues with social skills, issues sometimes with understanding what the employer wants, and sometimes just realizing that maybe the employment that I sought was maybe not the right job due to my disability.

What type of things are on the table to sustain employment for folks with disabilities?

The CHAIRMAN. Here you're going to learn the secret of being a successful Senator. I have expert staff answer questions like that.

[Laughter.]

All right, Andrew.

[Laughter.]

Mr. IMPERATO. He actually knows a lot more than he pretends to.

So the PPACA, in case people here don't know what that is, that is the full acronym for the Affordable Care Act. I think the full name is the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, but most

people in Washington stopped calling it the PPACA. Some people call it Obamacare, some people call it the Affordable Care Act.

I think it's a great question. Certainly, a lot of us in the disability policy world and the advocacy world are hopeful that when you get rid of pre-existing condition exclusions, when you get rid of lifetime caps on benefits, annual caps on benefits, that it becomes easier for people with disabilities that affect health care to get the kinds of services and support from the private health insurance industry that historically have been very difficult, if not impossible, to get and have forced people onto SSI and Medicaid, or SSDI and Medicare, but especially SSI and Medicaid in order to get those benefits.

So I think it's a great question. Senator Harkin is really advocating that we have a robust benefits package so that the actual benefits that people get will meet their needs. That's still to be determined. A lot of that is getting worked out at the State level.

Your other question was about—I think I understood it to be about keeping supports, long-term supports while you're working that can help you stay at work. That was something that we tried to address as part of the Workforce Investment Act that Senator Harkin mentioned.

There are some limits in the current Vocational Rehabilitation Act which will cutoff your job coach when you hit a certain threshold. I think it's 24 months in some States. I don't know. Is that about right? Yes.

So that's a mission question, right? Is it the mission of vocational rehabilitation to provide job coaches for longer than that for people that need it? Not everybody needs it, but for the people who need it. Is that a mission for Medicaid? Is that a mission for some other entity? I think we have to figure that out because there are people who need the services longer than the limits, and in the Rehab Act we lengthened that limit in our staff discussion of that, but it created a new limit, so it didn't completely solve the problem. But it's an important issue.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Andy.

Yes?

Ms. HUDSON. Hi. I'm Jane Hudson, J-a-n-e H-u-d-s-o-n, and I'm the director of Disability Rights Iowa. I do have a question. As I'm attending all of these meetings, I'm hearing that getting a job, employment, is a barrier to getting out of institutions, and it really puzzles me why someone should be kept in an institution, like a State resource center or a mental health institute or a nursing facility, because they can't find a job.

So what I would like to ask the panelists is, it's wonderful that you're living in your own homes and in the community. Would it be harder for you to find a job, for example, Alex, if you were in a nursing facility?

Mr. WATTERS. I don't know if it would necessarily be harder for me to find a job, but I don't think I'd have the social life I do.

[Laughter.]

I think, like Nate, I have been fortunate enough to make wonderful friends and live with them. In graduate school I lived with a fraternity brother and his fiancé throughout graduate school, and I'm now living with one of my best friends in a home. But I think

that, like Nate was mentioning and kind of focusing on, it's important that we either feel independent and have our own home, and along with that the opportunities to have gainful employment, not only because of that independence but also because of that peer-to-peer support that Mr. Shults was talking about.

I think that they go hand in hand. I think that when you're living independently or you're with your peers, I think that you're more likely to find and strive for that gainful employment. I think it's kind of a motivating factor, if you will. I don't know if that answers your question.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks for mentioning Delta Sigma Phi. I appreciate that.

[Laughter.]

I was in Delta Sigma Phi at Iowa State. It was the first national fraternity to welcome kids with disabilities as fraternity members, so I've always been proud of that.

[Applause.]

Jane, by the way, thanks for all your leadership in Disability Rights for Iowa. Thank you very, very much.

Yes, sir?

Mr. STRONG. Senator Harkin, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Frank Strong. It's F-r-a-n-k S-t-r-o-n-g. I'm from Des Moines, and I just wanted to share with you all. It's a question I have.

Are you aware that we have a disability awareness lecture every October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month? And this year we are featuring Dr. Alan Hurwitz from Gallaudet University. He's going to be talking to us about deafness issues. We feel that it's very critically important that we talk to people not only in the disability community but in the community at large about being aware of folks with disabilities.

And for folks, as Senator Harkin knows, folks that happen to be deaf are a part of the disability community that's not as visible as those of us who happen to be blind and carry white canes and those of us in wheelchairs, that use wheelchairs for mobility.

So this is why we promote our international disability lecture every year. It's going to be on October 19. That's a Friday, and we scheduled that especially for Senator Harkin. So if he happens to be in the community, we'd like to invite him to be part of that.

The CHAIRMAN. When is it again, Frank?

Mr. STRONG. It's Friday, October 19. It's going to be at the State capital building.

One of the neat things about Dr. Hurwitz—and if you don't know about Gallaudet University, it's the quintessential university for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in the world. It happens to be in Washington, DC. It has a long history of advocacy for people with disabilities, starting with advocating for themselves, but it's still a great university.

One of the greatest parts about his lecture or making that lecture is that he's not only a deaf person but he's also an Iowa person. So I'd like everybody to come down. We would love to see you come down to Des Moines to hear Dr. Hurwitz and learn more about deaf and hard-of-hearing issues.

I just didn't know if you were aware of this or not, Senator Harkin and others.

The CHAIRMAN. I am now.

Mr. STRONG. OK.

The CHAIRMAN. And I'm going to try to be there.

Yes, Alan grew up in Iowa. In fact, his father and my brother were in school together, the Iowa School for the Deaf.

Thanks, Frank. That's October 19. OK, got it. I got it.

Evelyne, are you next? Who is next over here? I'm sorry.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Good morning, Senator Harkin, and thank you. My name is Gary McDermott. I'm from Clinton. I'm a Vietnam veteran. I've been using a wheelchair for close to 40 years now, and I too went through the VA rehab system.

One of the things I see that we are having difficulty with in employment for those of us that drive our own vehicles, and not only that but enjoying life in general, is obtaining refueling assistance with our vehicles.

I know the ADA covers that section about refueling vehicles, but they are not listening to us, they are not paying attention to us. There are short little fixes, easy fixes to that, and sometimes I'd like to discuss that with you, if possible, and bring it to your attention. I see Andy nodding. He's probably aware of what I'm talking about.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we've heard this quite a bit in the past.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. I've been working on this issue for probably the last 3 to 4 years, and it's a nationwide problem.

The CHAIRMAN. The problem, as you probably all know, is that when I was young, gas stations had attendants who would come out. Now they don't have those attendants. Everything is all self-serve.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. It's all self-serve, but there are systems available where you can reach the interior people through a button and they come out and pump.

The CHAIRMAN. That's right, that's right.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. But we're having trouble getting the fuel stations to install that.

The CHAIRMAN. Some stations do have it. They have both manually activated or voice activated systems.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. The ones that they have are small buttons that are the size of a postage stamp on the pump, and you cannot reach them from your vehicle. So, therefore, you have to move your vehicle over, get out into the travel portion, go around, push the button, have somebody come out and help you. It's just not working. So we'd like to see some changes to that.

The CHAIRMAN. Andy would you like to say something?

Mr. IMPERATO. Just real quick. We're aware that that's an issue. I do a lot on Facebook, and I've seen a lot on Facebook on that recently.

There's a company in Chicago called Inclusion Solutions that has developed a solution with bigger buttons. Have you checked out their technology? Does that work better from your perspective? OK. So I think maybe the best thing for us to do, and we can take this as homework, is followup with the Civil Rights Division, the Disability Rights Section of the Justice Department.

This is about enforcing the ADA, and I think that the Justice Department could do a proactive technical assistance to the station

owners. So we can take that back and advocate for that. We have a strong assistant attorney general for civil rights who just testified in front of us on the *Olmstead* anniversary. His name is Tom Perez, and he's got a strong counsel who just testified with Senator Harkin in support of the U.N. Convention named Eve Hill. So we'll followup with them.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. OK. Hy-Vee Stores, who is based in Iowa, has placed that particular button in 110 stores. It's been very successful, and they love it, and so do the people with disabilities love it. So if you could do that, we'd be very pleased.

The CHAIRMAN. I asked Nate if he liked going to movies. I want to get back. Did I ever get a response? Oh, Avatar.

Nate, you like science fiction. So do I.

I'll ask Nate another question as we go around. Is that what you like best, science fiction movies? Or do you like westerns, or romance?

[Laughter.]

I just wondered what you like the best, Nate. OK? We'll go around.

Evelyne Villines.

Ms. VILLINES. Yes, I am Evelyne Villines. That's spelled E-v-e-l-y-n-e, V as in village, i-l-l-i-n-e-s, and I'm from Des Moines, and I'm delighted to be here today.

I know when they hand me a microphone it scares everybody to death because they think I'm going to make another speech, and they're right.

[Laughter.]

I just wanted to say I wanted to reminisce just a moment about what it was like to be on the lawn of the White House when we saw and had the opportunity to witness the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

There was a time when none of us ever thought it was going to happen, and many of us had worked so hard. And to see people sitting in wheelchairs and on stretchers and people on crutches and people who were blind and people who were deaf, and to see many of them with tears streaming down their eyes, and when they played the Stars and Stripes Forever, I don't think I've ever felt so American.

And I think, Tom, that this—pardon me, Senator.

The CHAIRMAN. No. Come on.

[Laughter.]

Ms. VILLINES. I think this is what you can carry in your heart, that today we are meeting on this wonderful day to talk about where do we go from here. You have been this magnificent figure for us, and I think it's the same as when you came to our congressional hearing, our congressional reception. People started crying. That's who your Senator is, and that's what he is, and I think for all of us, we have to be so very grateful.

You may applaud now, and then I have something else to say.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

I'm here today representing the AbilityOne Program and NISH, and I just wanted to, at this time—the way you treat your staff, Tom, I wanted to just remark to this guy over here, Andy, what

a magnificent presentation you made for our audience, and how I heard you quoted several times after you left. So I thank you for that.

The other thing I want to mention is that NISH, one of our initiatives is called Pathways to Careers. It's a collaboration between local non-profit agencies and school districts that establishes career exploration, including internships for students with significant disabilities. We are piloting the program in Utah. That didn't please me entirely, but they didn't ask me about it either.

We have come a long way. But sitting here today and listening to our young panel, I just thought how lucky you are for the opportunities that are out there for you, that you can build your life, and thank goodness somebody started talking about the social part of living with a disability. That is so important that you are accepted, that you have fun, that you have places to go, that people respect you. If I hadn't had that kind of social opportunity as a young girl, I'd never be sitting here with my daughter today, who is my chief caregiver now. So there are a lot of things that can happen when all of us work together.

Thank you for being here, and we look forward to seeing you in Washington before too long.

The CHAIRMAN. Always, Evelyne, always. Thank you very much, Evelyne. Thank you.

[Applause.]

I just want to say, Evelyne Villines has spoken in every State in this Nation, and I believe, has been an inspiration for so many people around the United States, and has hauled that chair of hers—I bet the miles would go from here to the moon and back three or four times, Evelyne.

But it's just been a wonderful inspiration. I thank you for your lifetime of work. You were there at the beginning, and you've never given up, and you've always fought so hard for making life better and making sure we have full inclusion, especially for the severely handicapped. That's been your focus and that's been your driving focus for so long, and I just can't thank you enough for your great leadership. You've been an inspiration for me, too, for all these years. Thank you, Evelyne, thank you.

[Applause.]

Ms. FISK. My name is Kay Fisk, K-a-y F-i-s-k, and I work for a non-profit neighborhood transportation service. One of the things that we haven't talked about much here today is transportation. Alex brought it up, and I was so glad to hear him say that. Richard, you mentioned it, too, when you were talking about Betty. You mentioned transportation.

Transportation is such a vital thing for anyone who has a disability. There are not very many ways to get around if you don't have good transportation. We're concerned right now in our community because all of the other non-profit people here that I work with have people who are concerned about transportation needs being cut.

One of the things that happened in our redesign in Iowa was that transportation was totally overlooked. I was at a meeting in Des Moines on Wednesday and Theresa Armstrong gave a very compelling presentation where she talked about the fact that trans-

portation wasn't brought into the conversation, that at the end it was talked about but it was after everything had already been decided.

This is something that we really need to look at. We really need to have transportation put at the forefront so that the people who have disabilities are not going to be disenfranchised. It's a grave, grave issue.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, it is, and we've been working on transportation issues for a long time. We had some great successes. We still have a long way to go.

One issue that Andy and I have been working on now for, oh, a year or two, a couple of years or so—we're making progress. You know, buses are accessible, trains are accessible, airplanes are accessible. You can take your companion dog or seeing-eye dog. Things are pretty good there. But the one we haven't cracked yet is taxicabs. I know that doesn't seem like a big thing here, but we're trying to get every taxicab in America to be fully accessible.

This was brought home to me a couple or 3 years ago. I went to London, and every taxicab in the city of London is fully accessible, every single one of them. In America, you have to call for one, and maybe a half-hour later or something it will show up.

So we've been working with cities like New York and Washington, DC and places like that to really get this thing changed, because they're making them. I've seen examples of fully accessible taxicabs. It's the same thing, my friends. Whenever we design something to think that we're helping accessibility for a person with a disability, we find out it helps everybody. I mean, I always think of curb cuts. We always think of the curb cuts as being for people with wheelchairs. All of a sudden, mothers with strollers, elderly people using walkers, the same way with ramps.

I said to Andy, I got this bill through for closed captioning to mandate that all TV sets have to have a chip in it that automatically decodes. That's a separate bill I got through in the 1990s. I got it because I wanted people who were deaf and hard of hearing to be able to know what was going on with closed captioning. Well, now I find that a lot of people are using it, especially in noisy environments like sports bars and things like that. They seem to like these things.

Universal design. The more universal we make the designs, the better off it is for everybody. And I'll tell you what, you take one of these cabs that is fully accessible and put it next to one that's not, and just take someone without a disability and say which one do you want, I'll tell you which one they'll take. They're just better. They're easier to get in and out of. They have a little bit more room inside. They're more comfortable.

But we just haven't quite gotten over that yet, but we're working on it, we're working on it. And to make sure that we have bus routes—Alex, you were talking about the route in Omaha. Well, the paratransit only has to go the same route as the normal buses. Well, that's got to be changed too, to make sure that if you don't happen to live on that bus route, you can still get the paratransit pickup and delivery at the same time.

Well, I didn't mean to go off on that, but it is an issue that we've just got to keep on it all the time, just keep on it all the time.

Mr. IMPERATO. Let me just say, I think we need to wrap up because I don't know—do we have the interpreters? We're OK? OK.

The CHAIRMAN. I asked Nate if he liked science fiction movies or westerns. Did I get a response, Nate?

Ms. SYMMONDS. He says funny movies are best, but he fears scary movies.

The CHAIRMAN. What did he say?

Mr. IMPERATO. Funny movies are best, but he fears scary movies.

The CHAIRMAN. Ah, funny movies. I should ask him if he likes the Pink Panther series of Peter Sellers, but I'm dating myself.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Yes?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Good morning, Senator Harkin. My name is Ben Woodworth, W-o-o-d-w-o-r-t-h, and I represent the Iowa Association of Community Providers.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes?

Mr. WOODWORTH. From our board of directors and our 140 providers statewide representing 25,000 employees and 100,000 Iowans with disabilities, we thank you for your support on these issues, and we continue to look forward to common-sense approaches both at the Federal and the State level to remove the barriers to community-based employment.

Much as our providers answered the call in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s for deinstitutionalization and community-based services, we look forward to working and partnering with both the Department of Human Services and the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services to create policies and funding that make sense for individualized services so people can experience the outcomes we're looking for. We thank you for your leadership on the national level with that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very, very much. I appreciate that.

One more?

Ms. REISINGER. Hi, good morning. My name is Dolores Reisinger. It's good morning because we didn't have lunch yet.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. What are you trying to tell me? Get out of here, Harkin?

[Laughter.]

Ms. REISINGER. I'm a retired teacher. I'm not looking for work. I live alone, and I don't want to—I don't have a caregiver. I'm a very independent person. I graduated with two Master's degrees from two different universities: one, the university in Sao Paolo, Brazil, with a Master's in history; and the second, the University of Northern Iowa with a Master's in Spanish, and I taught Spanish at Columbus High School in Waterloo. Then I went to work for the Iowa Department for the Blind as a vocational rehabilitation teacher for 19 years.

I'm wondering why the Department representative from the Iowa Department for the Blind is not here today. I'm not representing them. I'm here on my own.

I am also a member of the National Federation of the Blind, and my comment is that last year the Federation here in Iowa and other States demonstrated in front of the First Federal Building in Des Moines, and the problem is—I would like for you to comment and elaborate on this—when people are working in sheltered work-

shops, if they are ready for competitive employment but if they couldn't be placed in competitive employment right away, should they be paid minimum wages?

I heard so much about sub-minimum wages. Why people who are in workshops who are capable to do their jobs are being paid sub-minimum wages? Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Andy, go ahead. And I have something to add.

Mr. IMPERATO. I think it's important. Thanks for the question. I think it's important to recognize that Section 14C of the Fair Labor Standards Act, which is old and allows people with disabilities to be paid less than minimum wage, you're only allowed to do it if you have a certificate from the government that lets you do it, and the person that you're paying less than minimum wage is a person with a disability whose productivity is affected by their disability to the point where you can justify paying them less than minimum wage.

A lot of people would argue that that's old and we don't need that anymore, but it seemed like in your question the people you were describing are people that would have had the same level of productivity as people without disabilities. So even under current law, they should not be paid less than minimum wage, and we certainly would not support paying anybody less than minimum wage who has the same level of productivity as any other worker.

As Senator Harkin said before, we worked in the Workforce Investment Act to try to make sure that young people weren't being tracked into sub-minimum wage jobs in sheltered workshops, and we had a provision in there that required them to try competitive integrated employment before they would be eligible for anything else. That's an incremental step that we think will help change the trajectory in terms of sheltered workshops.

As Evelyne described, there are a lot of providers that run sheltered workshops that also have other employment services and want to give people other choices. Our feeling is if you expose young people to alternatives, they will select alternatives, and the providers will follow the demand the way that Rick Shults talked about.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think—wait. Nate, I asked Nate a question about Peter Sellers and Pink Panther.

Ms. SYMMONDS. This is what Nate said. He said Pink Panther is for old guys.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Boy, I've been shot down before, but that's about the best I've ever been shot down.

[Laughter.]

That was very good. I should ask Nate if he's ever thought about writing. He's a great writer. That's very good. He's got good writing skills.

Nate, you have good writing skills.

Anybody else? Anybody else have anything to add before we get out of here to go for lunch? Anybody at all? Ron? Alex? Anything else?

[No response.]

Well, I was going to cut it off.

Mr. IMPERATO. We need to for the interpreters.

The CHAIRMAN. Oh, and for the interpreters, too.

Well, listen, first of all, I'd like to thank all the witnesses for their testimony and insights and the progress we've made, but also the challenges that lie ahead here for the ADA generation. I'll keep using that phrase, the ADA generation. I appreciate all of you taking time from your busy schedules.

To the young people here, I commend you all for your hard work and achievement. I encourage you to continue to follow your dreams and to dream big, and don't take "no" or "can't do" for an answer. You also set tremendous examples for other people, too.

We'll leave the record open for 10 days to allow additional statements or supplements to be submitted for the record.

Again, I can't thank you all enough. Let's celebrate the progress we've made on the ADA in 22 years, but let's not rest on our laurels. We've got a lot of other things we've got to do to really make the dream of the ADA a reality for everyone.

Thank you very much for being here.

[Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 12:14 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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