

My name is Michelle Rakebrand and I am Assistant Counsel for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA is the largest business association in Connecticut and represents businesses of all sizes and industries. We are proud to say that most of our membership is made up of small employers with less than 50 employees.

**CBIA supports HB 7093, An Act to Establish a Task Force to Increase Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, with the hope that the legislative report will result in the expansion of the workforce to people with disabilities while offering incentives to businesses.**

Despite a strong job market and labor shortages in industries nationwide, a talent pool of nearly 11 million

potential hires has remained unutilized: people with disabilities.

Research has shown that employees with disabilities offer substantial business benefits to the workplace,

including increased innovation, improved productivity, a better work environment, and perform better financially.

A recent study performed by Accenture<sup>1</sup> revealed that U.S. GDP would boost \$25 billion if more persons with disabilities joined the labor force.

Persons with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in corporate America, despite the strength of the

U.S. labor market. Only 29% of Americans of working age (16–64) with a disability were employed as of July

2018, compared with 75% of those without a disability, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This results in an untapped talent pool of 10.7 million people. Additionally, the unemployment rate in 2017

for persons with a disability was more than twice that for those without a disability—9.2% versus 4.2%.

CBIA is encouraged that the report to be submitted to the legislature will provide best practices and recommendations for businesses of all sizes to attract, hire, retain, and advance diverse talent.

Thank you for your time and consideration. CBIA is ready and willing to assist the committee on this initiative.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/company-persons-with-disabilities>