

The Honorable Senator Marilyn Moore and Representative Catherine Abercrombie
Co-Chairs, Human Services Committee
300 Capitol Ave,
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Special Olympics Connecticut, Inc. and the 12,000+ individuals we service statewide, I urge you to support HB 7093 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Special Olympics Connecticut, Inc. (SOCT) provides year-round sports training and competition to individuals with intellectual disabilities, in addition to free health services offered through the various disciplines of our robust Healthy Athletes Program. Special Olympics is the largest provider of healthcare services for individuals with intellectual disabilities. SOCT is a proud member—1 of 400+ members—of the Alliance, the Voice of Community Nonprofits.

Although our Organization's direct mission is not to provide employment opportunities and services, participation in Special Olympics impacts the lives of its athletes in profound ways—extending beyond the scope of sports: most notably in building self-confidence, friendships and self-esteem. Special Olympics gives visibility to people with intellectual disabilities and visibility is the first step towards a positive cycle of inclusion, understanding, and respect. These benefits are carried off the playing fields and into our athletes' lives, workplaces, schools, and communities.

SOCT embraces the value and dignity of each person and celebrates their value as a contributing and meaningful member of the communities in which they live. Through our various programs—particularly our Unified Sports Program now provided in over 95% of all public high schools statewide—this is being realized. However, meaningful employment opportunities not under or unemployment is critical to each person's sense of dignity and self-worth.

We often hear the concerns of individuals we serve and their families regarding the difficult issues that exist around disability unemployment. SOCT agrees with the intent of this proposed bill and respectfully requests your support of HB 7093. It provides a positive step toward providing meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Michael B. Mason, Senior Vice President & CFO at 203-230-1201, ext. 227 or at michaelm@soct.org.

Special Olympics Connecticut