

respect ability

FIGHTING STIGMAS. ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES.

RespectAbility

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To: Members and Staff, Utah State Workforce Development Board

From: Staff, Board, and Apprentices of RespectAbility

Re: Public Comments for April 13, 2023 Meeting

Dear Chair Ralphs and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our comments for the Utah Workforce Development Board's April 2023 meeting. RespectAbility is a nonpartisan, nonprofit disability inclusion organization dedicated to fighting stigmas and advancing opportunities for the more than 60 million Americans with disabilities. This is America's largest minority group and one that anyone could join due to aging, illness, or accident. In Utah, just over one in five (22.3 percent) of people are living with disabilities.

Respectability makes the following policy recommendations based on our expertise in recruiting and employing people with disabilities, for Utah to improve outcomes for workers with disabilities:

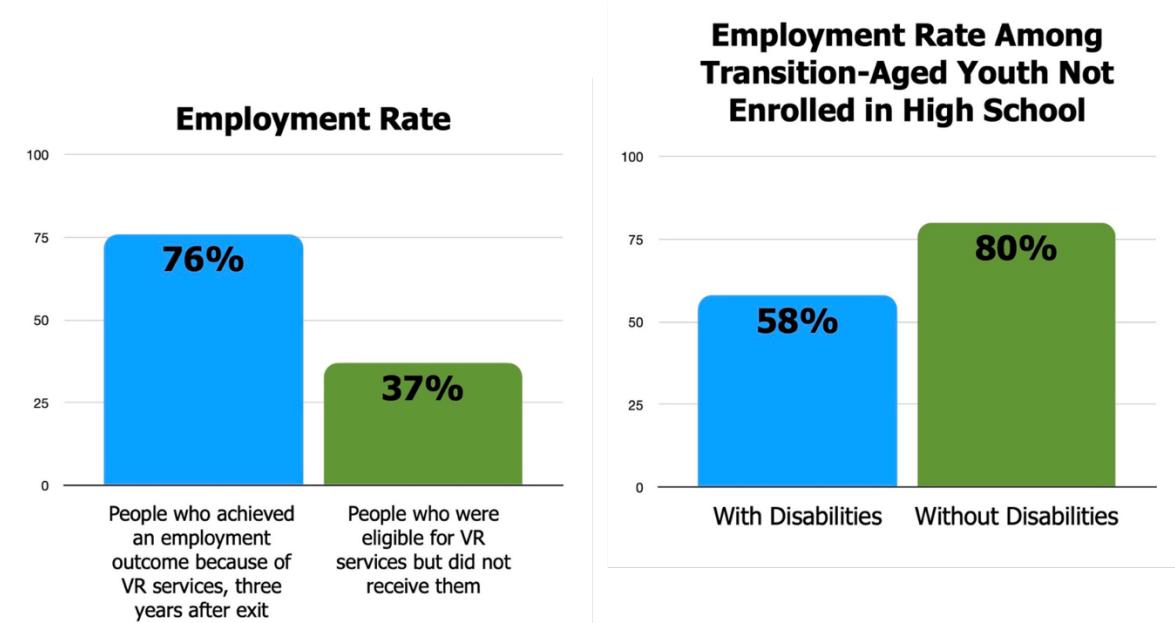
Parity for people with disabilities in the labor market

- ***Focus on closing the gap in labor force participation rates between Utahn with and without disabilities:*** In 2020, Utah's employment rate for all working-age people with and without disabilities demonstrated 50.2 percent gap in workforce participation. An increase in labor force participation amongst people with disabilities would be a significant benefit for employers struggling with labor shortages. It is a civil rights imperative to close this gap.
- ***Ensure that Utah's "High Road" workforce programs are inclusive to people with disabilities:*** There are more than 60 million people nationwide with some a disability, including both hidden and apparent disabilities. Utah employers will benefit tremendously from building a recruitment and workforce culture that empowers this key demographic. Establishing this culture and leading with best practices ensure people with disabilities remain in the workforce.
- ***Employment Transition Services***

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) found that among youth with disabilities who had been out of high school 1 to 4 years, 58 percent worked full time at their current or most recent job (Newman et al., 2009). In contrast, almost 80 percent of transition-

aged youth without a disability and not enrolled in high school were employed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). RespectAbility supports robust investment in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs since data demonstrates that it is cost-effective and successful.

The U.S. Department of Education found that among persons who achieved an employment outcome because of VR services, 76 percent were still working three years after exit compared to 37 percent of people who were eligible for VR services but did not receive them (Hayward & Schmidt-Davis, 2003).



If you have any questions or would like to follow-up on our recommendations, please contact Manager of State Policy Jimmy Fremgen, (202-517-6272).