

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS Eastern Regional Office

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Pennsylvania Civil Rights Panel to Convene a Briefing on The Status of Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Pennsylvania

What: Pennsylvania State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

When: Thursday, September 16, 12:30 pm EDT

Where: Millersville University
Binn's Room
42 North Prince Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Washington, DC -- -- The Pennsylvania State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (PA SAC) will convene a public briefing meeting to hear from invited researchers, government officials, advocates, policy experts, employers, and workers to review the opportunities for employment and advancement of persons with disabilities.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). When the ADA was passed in 1990 the total number of people ages 21-64 with a "work limitation" disability* employed nationwide was 2.97 million, or 2.8% of the nation's workforce. Today, the total number nationwide is 2.5 million, or 2.0% of the national workforce. In Pennsylvania twenty years ago the total number was 117,000 and 2.3% of the PA workforce. The numbers in PA today are 90,000 and 1.8% of the PA workforce . [*Persons with a "work limitation" disability are those who have a "health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do."]

"Both nationally and in the Commonwealth, the numbers have not improved -- they've gone down," said James Frazier, Chairman of the Pennsylvania SAC.

The PA SAC has invited experts to discuss the status of disabled workers—both nationally and in Pennsylvania. Among the confirmed invitees are Neil Romano, former Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor; Dr. Susanne Bruyère, Director, Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University; Dave Baum, PA Department of Labor,

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Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; and Louis Orslene, Co-Director, Job Accommodation Network (JAN). In addition, the Committee has confirmed as speakers government employers from the Pennsylvania Civil Service Commission—and employers from the private sector—Highmark, Inc.—who are working to improve the hiring and advancement of workers with disabilities as envisioned by the ADA. Workers with disabilities have also been invited to share their experiences.

The Committee has asked these experts to describe what's working and what needs to be fixed, in order that more persons with disabilities are employed in jobs that provide livable wages, along with opportunities for advancement.

This meeting is open to the public; the proceedings will be transcribed; an ASL Interpreter will be present throughout the scheduled presentations. For more information contact Ivy L. Davis, Director, Eastern Regional Office at 202-376-7533, or James T.G. Frazier, Chairman of the Pennsylvania Advisory Committee at 412-362-7326.

Interested persons may submit written statements on this topic by mail, fax, or electronically as provided below. In addition, at the conclusion of the formal presentations from the invited experts, the Committee will take brief verbal statements from audience members on the issue of employment of persons with disabilities.

Committee members and presenters will be available for media interviews.

Congress has directed the Commission to establish state advisory committees (SACs) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to study issues and forward advisory reports to the Commission on matters within the agency's jurisdiction that reflect the views of the majority of SAC members producing the report.

The SACs' reports to the Commission are wholly independent, and reviewed by Commission staff only for legal and procedural compliance with Commission policies and procedures. SAC reports are not subject to Commission approval, fact-checking or policy changes.

Members of the PA Advisory Committee are: Christopher Armstrong of Bloomsburg, Elisa Basnight of Philadelphia, Richard Bockol of Gladwyne, Alberto Cardelle of Stroudsburg, ImJa Choi of Jenkintown, Nancy Gippert of Harrisburg, Patricia Hopson-Shelton of Millersville, Craig Hymowitz of Philadelphia, Steven Irwin of Pittsburgh, Fay Ritter of Pittsburgh, William Rothman of Leymoynne, Connie Tarr of Greensburg, and James Frazier of Pittsburgh is Chair.