

This month we celebrate October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). NDEAM was declared by Congress in 1988 to spread awareness and the contributions of people with disabilities while at work. People in the disability community want to work and are ready to work now more than ever with [small businesses](#), corporations, and our own government looking to hire workers. Work should always include equal pay for equal work.

I am glad this month is here to bring awareness because there is still so much that needs to be done in NJ and across the country. As reported on page 12 of [Advancing New Jersey's Employment First Report](#), of the individuals receiving day and employment services from DDD, only 14% are in integrated employment services, which is the eighth lowest in the nation. [Competitive integrated employment](#) (CIE) is having people with disabilities earn the same pay as others without disabilities. It means those with disabilities can work where people without disabilities work. Across the country, the employment rate for adults with disabilities over the age of 25 is bleak. [Among the population ages 25 to 54](#), around 36% of people with a disability were in the workforce, compared to 80% of those without a disability. For workers ages 65 and older, 7.3% with a disability were in the workforce, compared to 21.7% without a disability.

Since the onset of the pandemic, now hiring signs are present at most businesses, and corporations are now not only making commercials to get consumers to buy their products, but they are also attempting to get consumers to work for them. [According to a survey](#) of 1,100 businesses by Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business Voices, 90% of businesses that are hiring are finding it difficult to recruit qualified candidates for open positions. In March, employers advertised a record 11.5 million job openings. The United States now [has two job openings for every unemployed person](#). The business community at large needs to work with the disability community so more job openings can be filled by individuals with disabilities. Common misconceptions such as believing every person with a disability needs a workplace accommodation, are false. According to a U.S. Chamber of Commerce study, [only 14.5 employees with disabilities request workplace accommodations](#). According to that same study, companies with the most inclusive workplaces for employees with disabilities experienced nearly 30% higher revenues and greater economic profits.

In NJ work is being done to get more people with disabilities jobs. New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, has signed four bills that should improve the employment rate for people with disabilities in NJ. [S3455](#) Revises eligibility requirements for NJ Workability Program and Personal Assistance Services Program. This means individuals with disabilities on Medicaid can continue to receive services while starting or continuing to work without an income cap or age cap. Bill [S1937](#) signed by the Governor in 2021 establishes a task force to promote employment by state agencies for people with disabilities, Bill [A5294](#) signed by the Governor this year, provides fast-track hiring and advancement employment opportunities by the state for persons with significant disabilities. Lastly, Bill [A5296](#) signed by the Governor this year provides for employment by the state of certain persons with disabilities. All four have yet to be implemented and we hope that Governor Murphy's administration gets to work on the legislation.

