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MEDIA RELEASE

Disability Inclusion Opportunity Summit to Focus on Businesses Hiring and Retaining Employees with Disabilities

*Strategies and Tools for Businesses;
U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth to Address Conference*

On Friday, October 13th, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation's [Chicagoland Business Leadership Network \(CBLN\)](#) will host the [3rd Annual Disability Inclusion Opportunity Summit](#). October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The full-day *Opportunity Summit* (8:00am-3:00pm) is the largest event of its kind in the Midwest and will focus on key issues for the Chicago region's economy and communities. 11% of Illinois' population, a total of 1.4 million people, have a disability of some type. People with disabilities are a talented and innovative segment of workers. Yet only 35% of them in Illinois are employed, compared to 75% of people without disabilities.

"Attracting and retaining workers is a top challenge for Chicago-area businesses," said Ann Kisting, Executive Director of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation. "Workers with disabilities comprise a large, untapped talent pool. They can help solve businesses challenges."

The *Opportunity Summit* is produced by businesses, for businesses and will feature:

- National leaders in the disability inclusion space, who will share the newest strategies and best practices for recruiting, hiring, and working with people who have disabilities
- U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth
- People with disabilities who were hired and represent great business success stories
- Businesses that are demonstrating increased hiring of workers with disabilities

Discussion topics at the conference include: *How Hiring People with Disabilities Can Increase a Business' Bottom Line*; *Working After Acquiring a Disability*; *Prioritizing Disability Within a Larger D&I Strategy*; and *The Autism Spectrum Meets the Hiring Manager*.

Video from a prior year's *Opportunity Summit* can be viewed [at this link](#) and downloaded for news use by those who received this media release directly from the Chicagoland Chamber.

DATA & FACTS ABOUT DISABILITY INCLUSION

- 57 million people in America, more than 20% of the population, live with disabilities.
 - More than 50 percent of them are in their working years.
- In Illinois, 1.4 million people, 11% of the population, have a disability of some type.
 - Of the 1.4 million Illinoisans with a disability, only 35% are employed, whereas 75% without disabilities are employed.
- In the Chicagoland region 820,000 people, 9.7% of the population, have a disability of some type.
- Businesses need qualified workers to fill changing job requirements. Many are unable to find qualified job applicants through normal channels of recruitment. One option is exploring methods to more effectively recruit, market, and hire from the talented pool of job applicants with disabilities.
- People with disabilities also comprise a significant consumer market.

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The Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce represents more than 1,100 member organizations that employ 400,000 people and create more than \$24 billion in revenue. It combines the power of its membership with a legacy of leadership and business advocacy to drive a dynamic economy. The Chicagoland Chamber focuses on delivering value for its members, making Chicagoland a world-class place to live and work.

The Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation coordinates educational resources, programs and research to advance the activities of the Chicagoland Chamber. Foundation activities allow the Chamber to collaborate with strategic partners and organizations to address key business issues, and extend the scope of Chamber activities. These initiatives serve a diverse audience including community leaders, entrepreneurs, business executives, employees, as well as educators. Pillars of the Foundation include workforce development, disability inclusion and business education.

The Chicagoland Business Leadership Network (CBLN) is Illinois' only business-led, business-focused organization that addresses specific needs relating to the inclusion of people with disabilities from a talent, customer, supplier diversity and community perspective. A program of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the CBLN is an approved affiliate of the U.S. Business Leadership Network.