

## BRIDGING THE ECONOMIC DIVIDE FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

*National Disability Institute Convenes Financial Inclusion Summit in Atlanta*

**Washington, D.C. (April 30, 2018)** – Today, [National Disability Institute](#) (NDI) assembled policymakers, stakeholders and leaders, from both the disability community and financial services sector, at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Ga. for a *Financial Inclusion Summit*. The *Summit* addressed the financial knowledge, skill gaps and barriers that prevent Americans with disabilities from participating in the economic mainstream and focused on creating solutions to assure their access to financial mainstream services.

“Twenty-eight years after the signing into law of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), there remain persistent barriers to economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities, a third of whom live below the poverty line,” Michael Morris, Executive Director, National Disability Institute, said. “Equal opportunity must include options to build the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed financial decisions, access to financial education and coaching, affordable and accessible financial services and products, inclusion in career pathways and the ability to save and build assets.” He added, “The *Atlanta Financial Inclusion Summit* is about the power of collaboration. Together, we can build opportunity for shared prosperity and the full participation of Americans with disabilities in the economic mainstream.”

As the nation’s first nonprofit dedicated exclusively to improving the financial health and future of all people across the spectrum of disability, NDI has long documented the unique financial challenges and hurdles individuals with disabilities face. In December 2017, NDI released the report, [Financial Capability of Adults with Disabilities: Findings from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation National Financial Capability Study](#).

Findings from the report include:

- Among adults ages 18-64, one in nine have a disability and, of those, one in three are employed.
- People with disabilities are twice as likely to have income less than \$35,000, leading to a high rate of skipped medical treatments compared to those without disabilities (46 percent vs. 25 percent).
- People with disabilities are three times more likely to have extreme difficulty paying bills.
- Fifty-five percent of people with disabilities reported that they could not come up with \$2,000 for an emergency, compared to 22 percent of those without a disability.
- Compared to people without disabilities, those with disabilities are more likely to be late on mortgage payments (31 percent vs. 14 percent), overdrawn on

checking accounts (31 percent vs. 18 percent) and take loans from retirement accounts (23 percent vs. 10 percent).

Collaborating organizations for the event included 1<sup>st</sup> Choice Credit Union, The Center for Financial Independence and Innovation, Credit-ABLE, FDIC, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Georgia Department of Community Health, Georgia STABLE, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Internal Revenue Service, Office of the State Treasurer, National Disability Institute, Shepherd Center, Southeast ADA Center, Synergies Work, Tools for Life-Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program and United Way of Greater Atlanta.

The overflow crowd at the *Summit* heard from a diverse set of speakers representing both public and private interests and the nonprofit sector. Special guests included: Olivia B. Alston, Manager, Income and Community Engagement, United Way of Greater Atlanta; Tena Blakey, Director of Developmental Disabilities Services for Altrus; Zach Bradley, Peer Supporter and Vocational Counselor, Shepherd Center; Kate Brady, Deputy Director, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities; Judith Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Dietra Grant, Director, Customer Assistance, Relationships and Education Organizations (CARE); Rodney Hood, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Office of Nonprofit Engagement, JPMorgan Chase & Co.; Danny Housley, Tools for Life Assistive Technology Funding and Resource Specialist, AMAC Accessibility, Georgia Institute of Technology, College of Design; Elaine Hunter, Community Affairs Specialist, Savannah Field Office, FDIC; Doug Jackson, Deputy Director, STABLE Accounts; Sheilah Montgomery, Board Member, National Disability Institute; Frank Nolden, Director, Stakeholder Partnerships, Education and Communication (SPEC), IRS; Aarti Sahgal, Founder, Synergies Work; Lance Triggs, President, Field Operations, Operation HOPE; and Barry Whaley, Director, Southeast ADA Center, Burton Blatt Institute. Each speaker highlighted their own and/or organization's work to help Americans with disabilities build a more financially secure and independent life.

During the afternoon session, *Summit* attendees formed working groups to identify pathways to create better economic futures for all individuals with disabilities. The goal was to develop and refine strategies to fulfill the promise of the Americans with Disabilities Act "to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities." Following the breakout session, the working groups gave their reports and recommendations to advance financial inclusion for Americans with disabilities.

Visit the [Atlanta Financial Inclusion Summit](#) webpage for more information. Photographs of the event are available upon request.

The Financial Inclusion Summit was made possible through lead funding from JPMorgan Chase.

**About National Disability Institute**

*National Disability Institute (NDI) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to building a better economic future for people with disabilities. The first national organization committed exclusively to championing economic empowerment, financial education, asset development and financial stability for all persons with disabilities, NDI affects change through public education, policy development, training, technical assistance and innovative initiatives. NDI and its Real Economic Impact (REI) Network have helped more than 2.3 million people with disabilities receive nearly \$2.3 billion in tax refunds and credits. To learn more, visit [www.realeconomicimpact.org](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org). Engage with NDI on Facebook: RealEconImpact or follow NDI on Twitter: @RealEconImpact. Take the pledge to DISABLE POVERTY at [www.disablepoverty.org](http://www.disablepoverty.org).*

**Contact:**

Kathleen Brannigan  
National Disability Institute  
kbrannigan@ndi-inc.org  
202 296 5393