



BRIDGING THE ECONOMIC DIVIDE FOR AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
National Disability Institute Convenes Financial Inclusion Summit in New Orleans

Washington, D.C. (September 20, 2017) – Today, [National Disability Institute](#) (NDI) assembled policymakers, stakeholders and leaders, from both the disability community and financial services sector, at the University of New Orleans Homer L. Hitt Alumni & Visitor’s Center in New Orleans, Louisiana 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-seven 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. The *New Orleans 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 April 2017, NDI released a report titled *Banking Status and Financial Behaviors of Adults with Disabilities: Findings from the 2015 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households*.

Findings from the report include:

- Among those who are banked, more than 40 percent have a checking account, but do not have a savings account.
- Only 40 percent of households with a disability save for unexpected expenses, compared with 61 percent of other households. In addition, savings are more likely to be kept at home or with family and/or friends rather than in a savings account.
- Almost half of households with disabilities have no credit and are twice as likely to lack credit as households with no disability.

- Households with disabilities face a digital divide; only half of households with a disability have internet access at home or a smart phone, compared with three-quarters of households without disability.

Collaborating organizations for the event included Access to Meaningful Employment, Advocacy Center of Louisiana, City of New Orleans, FDIC, Internal Revenue Service, Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network, LA Able-Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, Louisiana Workforce Commission, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and United Way of Southeast Louisiana.

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: Larry Bagneris, Director of the Human Relations Commission, City of New Orleans; Yvette Ruiz, Vice President, Office of Nonprofit Engagement, JP Morgan Chase & Co.; Eva Belcas, Executive Director, Access to Meaningful Employment (AcME); Vincenzo Pasquantonio, Community Work Incentive Coordinator, Advocacy Center of Louisiana; Tyana Daquano, Public Information Officer, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance; Sharese Morton, Manager, Financial Loan Program, Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN); Regina Austin, Community Affairs Specialist, FDIC; Nancy Gresham-Jones, Southern District Community Affairs Officer, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency; Odessa Adams-Payne, Vice President, Financial Capability, United Way of Southeast Louisiana; Willie Ann Jones, Senior Stakeholder Relationship Tax Consultant, Internal Revenue Service; and Kelvin Boston, Author and Financial Journalist. 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.

As part of the day's program, a proclamation from New Orleans Mayor Mitchell J. Landrieu was presented by Larry Bagneris, Director of the Human Relations Commission, City of New Orleans, announcing September 20, 2017 as Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment Day.

Visit the [New Orleans 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. Engage with NDI on Facebook: [RealEconImpact](https://www.facebook.com/RealEconImpact) or follow NDI on Twitter: [@RealEconImpact](https://twitter.com/RealEconImpact). Take the pledge to DISABLE POVERTY at www.disablepoverty.org.

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