

**Chairman Steve Chabot (R-OH)**  
**Committee on Small Business**  
***“Ready, Willing, and Able to Work: How Small Businesses Empower People with  
Developmental Disabilities”***  
**May 9, 2018**

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

Good morning. I call this hearing to order. Thank you all for being with us.

Last Friday, the Department of Labor reported that the [non-farm] unemployment rate is 3.9 percent, the lowest rate in more than 17 years. The last time the unemployment rate remained below four percent for a sustained period was the late 1960s. April also marked the 91st consecutive month of job gains, the longest streak of monthly increases on record.

While this is great news for America, here at the Small Business Committee, we continue to hear from small businesses about a consequence of historically low unemployment: the lack of qualified applicants, or the “skills gap.” During times of economic prosperity, small businesses often find it more difficult to compete with large companies in attracting qualified candidates, leaving jobs unfilled.

One segment of American society that is often overlooked when discussing economic opportunities through new job growth is the special needs community, which brings us to the topic of today’s hearing.

About two years ago, this Committee held a hearing about small business opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While employment and labor force participation rates for the disabled population have increased since then, there are still many individuals who want to obtain meaningful and sustaining employment.

Given the innovation, flexibility, and diversity of small businesses, they can offer inclusive environments for employees with developmental disabilities, and fill jobs vital to operating and expanding their businesses.

Today, we are highlighting small businesses and entrepreneurs who are successfully creating jobs and providing opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. We will also hear from advocates who are continuing to raise awareness to small business employers that these individuals are ready, willing, and able to work.

I appreciate the witnesses being here. I look forward to your testimony.

I now yield to the Ranking Member for her opening remarks.

