

## **SUPPORTING DISABLED ENTREPRENEURS ACT**

Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Mike Braun (R-IN)

The *Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act* will increase awareness about disabled entrepreneurship by directing the Small Business Administration (SBA) to designate a Coordinator for Disabled Small Business Concerns and to collect data, on a voluntary basis, on the disability status of small business owners participating in programs at the agency.

### **Background:**

One billion people, or 16% of the world's population, have a disability, making the disability community the largest minority in the world. In the United States, one in four people live with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities face barriers to employment, including those related to workplace accessibility and social stigma; however, entrepreneurship offers an alternative path to traditional employment and financial freedom for persons with disabilities. To achieve economic prosperity and independence, individuals with disabilities turn to self-employment and small business development at a rate that is nearly twice that of people without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> According to a report by National Disability Institute, approximately 1.8 million individuals with disabilities are business owners.<sup>2</sup> Disabled entrepreneurs are also more likely to hire individuals with disabilities than non-disabled owners.

The disability community represents a plethora of untapped talent and ideas for new businesses, and doubles as a significant customer base in search of inclusive products. Unlocking entrepreneurial opportunity for individuals with disabilities is essential for creating financial stability and generational wealth – as well as for the health and sustainability of the national economy.

### **This legislation directs SBA to:**

- 1) Establish a Coordinator for Disabled Small Business Concerns at the agency;
- 2) Collect voluntary demographic data from program applicants on disability status; and
- 3) Publish data on the participation of disabled entrepreneurs in SBA programs.

**This bill is endorsed by National Disability Institute, 2Gether-International, Gallaudet University and the Gallaudet Innovation and Entrepreneurship Institute, Disability:IN, American Association of People with Disabilities, National Down Syndrome Congress, National Federation of the Blind, Prosperity Now, National Small Business Association, America's Small Business Development Center Network, Association of Women's Business Centers, Association for Enterprise Opportunity, Melwood, Alliance for Expanding America's Workforce, CEO Commission for Disability Employment, Autism Society of America, National Down Syndrome Society, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, UNH Institute on Disability and Disability Rights Center - NH.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/reports/small-business-ownership-pwd-challenges-and-opportunities/>