



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

### **CCD Rights Task Force**

#### **Addressing Poverty Among People with Disabilities: Key Principles**

- The Rights Task Force advocates on a wide variety of matters involving the civil rights of individuals with disabilities, with a primary focus on the landmark civil rights law for people with disabilities—the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The ADA set forth four key goals for people with disabilities: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Assertive enforcement of the ADA as well as other civil rights laws (including Sections 501, 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Fair Housing Act, and other laws) to achieve these goals and break down the barriers that have kept people with disabilities isolated and marginalized is critical to any effort to reduce poverty among people with disabilities.
- In particular, enforcement of the protections against employment discrimination in the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act is essential to open workplace doors to people with disabilities and ensure that they can retain jobs. Similarly, affirmative action requirements for federal agencies and federal contractors to employ people with disabilities are an important mechanism to address the widespread poverty and unemployment among people with disabilities; yet enforcement of these requirements has been lackluster for many years, until efforts by the current Administration to strengthen these rules. For years, individuals with disabilities have had the highest unemployment rate and the lowest workforce participation rate of any group in the country, have been significantly less likely to work full-time than people without disabilities, have had median earnings that are less than two-thirds those of workers without disabilities, and have had a poverty rate more than twice that of people without disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, *Fulfilling the Promise: Overcoming Persistent Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency for People with Disabilities* (Majority Committee Staff Report), Sept. 18, 2014, at 5-6.

- Other civil rights protections outside of the workplace are also key to addressing poverty among people with disabilities. For example, discriminatory policies and practices in housing, education, public services, and health care also contribute to keeping people with disabilities in poverty.
- Also key to ending poverty is ensuring that people with disabilities have the health care and employment services they need to work. Too often, the only “day services” options offered by disability service systems are segregated programs that keep people with disabilities isolated and fail to help them secure and maintain competitive, integrated employment. Enforcement of the ADA’s integration mandate to ensure that people with disabilities receive the services they need to have meaningful work opportunities is an important part of reducing poverty among people with disabilities.