>> Kevin McCloskey: All right, welcome everybody to Disability Belongs™' kickoff of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, also known as NDEAM. We do have an ASL interpreter and live CART captions for this webinar. You can turn on the captions with the CC button on the Zoom menu. This webinar is also being recorded and it will also be available on the Disability Belongs™ website later this week, once we have those captions added. The slides will also be sent to all people who have registered along with the recording. So as we know, NDEAM is a really great time to raise awareness, great time to educate yourself. But more importantly, it's a really great opportunity to actually hire people with disabilities. And we have a bunch of great webinars throughout the month of October here with Disability Belongs™ starting with today's -- today's webinar, which is Universal Design: Enabling Good Jobs for All. So I'm happy to present our speakers for today: Rebecca Langbein and Meaghan Walls. Over to you!

>> Rebecca Langbein: Thanks Kevin. Hi, and welcome everybody. My name is Rebecca Langbein. I'm the Manager of the National Leadership Program here at Disability Belongs™. And today I have here with me Meaghan Walls, who is the CEO of the Center for Disability Inclusion. So this is a partnership event that we're really excited to share with you today, mostly because we're both really big universal design nerds, and we are happy to share that passion with you. I'll pass it over to Meaghan to say a little bit about Centers for Disability Inclusion.

>> Meaghan Walls: Yeah, thanks Rebecca. This is one of my favorite topics to talk about, so I'm excited to share with you our thoughts and ideas around this in NDEAM. I'm the CEO for Center for Disability Inclusion, and we are an organization that works with businesses on their disability inclusion efforts. So we do consulting and training and a variety of other things to help businesses better position themselves as employers of choice for people with disability. And I bring that universal design lens into that work and help businesses see the value of universal design to making their workplace more disability inclusive.

>> Rebecca: Awesome. Next slide please, Eric.

>> Meaghan: [crosstalk] I didn't know which side we were going to be on. You know, so I told you I was the CEO for Center for Disability Inclusion, and you're like, great, that's awesome, but what do you actually know about this work? And so what I've given you so far is what we'll call the "above the water line introduction," right? My name, I can tell you I'm -- wearing glasses, I'm a middle -- early middle age female with brown hair wearing a green shirt, and that's about all that you could discern besides what I've already told you. But it's important in this work to get to know -- the people around us and the people doing the work, and if I'm going to be building your confidence in what I can do, it's probably important for you to know that I've spent my entire career in the disability space, but my journey started even further back than that. I was immersed in the disability world through my mom's work, starting a medically based child care. I'm here in Omaha, Nebraska, but I've lived in different parts of the country. And I really just got interested in adaptive technology, removing barriers so people could do the things that they wanted to do, and I studied rehab engineering to look at accessibility and assistive technology and accommodation and universal design, and how those can be implemented and used to remove barriers to participation. And I've taken that with me throughout throughout my career, which is how I met -- Rebecca.

>> Rebecca: Yes, awesome. So Megan just gave you her below the waterline introduction. So if we think about who everybody -- who we are as an iceberg, there's the above the waterline stuff -- what you can see from just looking at someone, which really isn't all that much. Who we are and who we appear to be can be completely different things. So, just by looking at me -- I can tell you I'm a very pale skinned 30-year-old woman wearing glasses and a striped t-shirt wearing glasses, and I am in front of a Disability Belongs™ background. But what you don't know by just looking at me is that I have a doctorate in occupational therapy, and I'm also an engineer which is how I came to the world of universal design after being really frustrated by the fact that we are not taught as engineers to think about the people that are going to use the products and spaces and processes that we design. So that's how I came to the world of universal design, interested in starting to incorporate that human-centered perspective into design, and that's why I became an occupational therapist to gain more of the disability perspective and Implement that into design. And what we're trying to get at with these introductions -- the above the waterline versus below the waterline introduction -- is that who we are and who we appear to be -- it's not always something you can tell by just looking at someone. So we can never know someone's life experiences simply by the way that they present. And the same goes for disability status. Just because someone doesn't appear to be disabled, it doesn't mean that they're not. It doesn't mean that they're not a person with a disability. And this is an important thing to keep in mind whenever you're thinking about the disability community, especially in the workplace, because we can't know all of anybody's experiences or identities until they disclose them to us. So next slide please, Eric.

>> Meaghan: Yeah -- and when we think think about -- why this matters -- as Rebecca alluded to, there's a lot about people's life experience that we can't discern on first introduction or first visual sight. And so it's not until we start to get to know people, build that trust, build those relationships, that maybe we become privy to that information. But the disability community is the largest minority group, and the only demographic group that any of us can join at any times in our lives. And in fact, if we are lucky enough to live long enough, we're more and more likely to become part of the disability community -- even if it's on a temporary basis, recovering from an injury or an illness. And so thinking about how we can design the world better, design our work environments, our policies, our processes, our community spaces -- it designs them better for better access for people disabilities, but ultimately, with the integration of universal design, it actually designs them in a way that works better for all of us. And since disability does or will affect us at some part in our lives, or someone in our lives, if we're proactive about how we think about and design things, we create spaces that inherently work better and are more inclusive, which just results in -- better opportunities to connect and get to that below the waterline place in our lives. Next slide? And disability -- I said it's the largest minority group, but what does that actually mean? So it really -- it impacts more people than you may think. So whether it's yourself or it's someone that you care about or someone you work with or all of the above -- there are 61 million people in the United States that report having a disability, which -- that's one in four adults. So thinking about your classroom setting or -- the next time you're in a workplace meeting, right, there's disabilities related to physical being, sensory -- so our hearing, our sight, other processing -- cognitive, mental health, and 500 known -- conditions that qualify under the disability umbrella. What's important to remember too, this -- we're going to keep going back to the iceberg kind of concept -- that of all of those different types and categories of disability that exist, 74% of them are considered non-apparent. So this image shows -- some disabilities, you may be able to -- visually discern, detect, identify. But 74% of them, unless you have some more information, you likely won't. And this is important in a lot of ways, but -- society -- societally, we have kind of come to equate the use of a wheelchair or mobility aid as the identifier of disability, right? And -- it's understandable in many ways, our international symbol of accessibility is someone using a wheelchair, it's everywhere, from -- our entrances on buildings, our parking, our facilities -- if something is meant to be accessible, that's the -- that's what's put on there. But there are a lot more lived experiences that make up the disability community. And so it's important to not disregard someone's lived experience because you can't visibly detect it on the surface. You know, and over the past few years doing our work at CDI, at the Center for Disability Inclusion, businesses have been telling us that their mental health self-disclosures have been continually increasing, and they actually are the largest category of disability disclosures that they receive, that sometimes lead to -- lead into accommodation requests and policy and process conversations. It can impact perceptions of performance, and how other -- and other aspects of the workplace experience. And so if we don't give as much respect to non-apparent disabilities as we've got given to apparent disabilities -- we do a disservice to our employees.

>> Rebecca Langbein: Next slide Eric? Yeah, so before we get too much further, Meaghan touched on it, but just to reiterate it in a different way, let's think about the definition of disability. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act or the ADA, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. So major life activities could be things like taking care of yourself, brushing your teeth, eating, taking a shower, getting dressed. It could be anything related to moving about, getting to work, getting home from work, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning. So there are a lot of different components that go into that definition, but that definition also does center on that word impairment. So I would encourage you -- especially when you start to think about Universal Design, which is what we are getting to, I promise -- is to think about the social model of disability, which instead of focusing on an impairment that is is innate, something part of an individual, it focuses on disability as something that people can be disabled by barriers in an environment or in systems or in societies. So instead of there's an impairment within a person and therefore they can't do this job, well, no, maybe there's a barrier in that workplace that makes it so that person can't do that job. And that kind of mindset shift is really important, especially for employers to think about well -- it's not that a disabled person can't do your job. There's a way that you could set up that job or that environment or that system or that policy or even your interviewing process to make it so that people with disabilities can do your jobs. It's just all about the design and the thought process that goes into the systems and the policies and the processes and the procedures that are in place. So that's something we're going to dive a little bit deeper into in just a few minutes. Next slide please, Eric? And just, again, to really drive this home, who does this impact when we're talking about disabilities? Disabilities are temporary and they're permanent. They're visible and they are nonapparent. There can be from birth or they can be acquired later. And actually, only 17% of people with disabilities are born with disabilities. So that has a really big impact, especially in the workplace, on retention, when you think about the fact that 83% of people who are going to be disabled are not born with it. So there's a pretty good chance that those people are acquiring those disabilities at some point in their working life. So making workplaces that are barrier-free and that are designed to cast the widest net of inclusion are really going to support a lot of people being able to do jobs in your workplace, to thrive in those jobs, and to stay in those jobs, even when disability may become part of their life. Next slide please, Eric? And so what can be done to ensure success for people with disabilities? Unfortunately, the stats here speak for themselves. 65% of people with disabilities finish High School. 7% of people are born with a disability and complete college. And one in three people with disabilities have a job. So those are pretty grim statistics, largely because a lot of the systems and physical environments were not built with people with disabilities in mind. And they're the same systems and built environments that we continue to use today. But there are a lot of steps that employers can take to start to break down some of those barriers, and rearrange those systems, and even conceptualize those systems in a different way that makes it so that more people can get access to those jobs -- to jobs at those employers. And that's what we're going to try and give you some tips and ways to think about today.

>> Meaghan Walls: Yeah. So -- I want to kind of focus around the statistic -- the third statistic on that last slide, that one in three people with disabilities have a job. So that means that there's -- a 66-67% unemployment rate for working age individuals with disabilities. And you know, compared to the non-disabled peers in the same working group, that's a really big gap in opportunity and employment and abilities to thrive and engage in our communities. And information that's on the slide here is kind of a culmination of a couple of different reports, but -- in 2018 a few different organizations -- Accenture, Disability:IN, and American Association of People with Disabilities -- did some digging, they did some research, right? And they found -- they looked at employment data, and it showed huge gaps in the labor force participation -- with 60% of people with disabilities not being in the workforce, versus 22% of their non-disabled peers. And when they looked at the number of people that that was and the potential impact on our national economics as well as business economics, they saw some pretty outstanding things. The -- a 1% increase in employment for people with disabilities -- so at the time of the study there were 10.7 million potential employees with disabilities not in the workforce, so a 1% increase is -- 100,000 jobs, right? It could result in $25 billion dollars in growth for the U.S. GDP. So that's money back into our communities, money back into our organizations, and that people are using to better their lives, whether that's -- buying a house or taking vacation, right, all of those different things. But on the business side of things, they found that businesses who are intentional and actively recruiting, retaining, and promoting disabled talent are -- were seeing an average of 28% higher revenue, double the net income, and 30% higher profit margins over a four year period. So that just general health of our economy that could be boosted by a 1% increase. So imagine if there's a 5% increase, right, and that gap closes even more. And here's another really powerful number. There is 1 trillion dollars of market opportunity left on the table -- spending power in the disability community because services, environments -- travel destinations, places like that aren't designed to be fully accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities and the people that they travel with. So the impact -- the potential market impact is actually -- globally I believe it's 13 trillion, because people often vacation with other people, right? So as they go around and bring their money and their resources to other communities -- but that can only happen if there's employment to support their ability to have discretionary income and go do these things, and if the places that they're trying to go do those things are designed in a way to welcome them and be accessible to them. And while we're optimistic, we're both very -- positive and excited about this work, but when Rebecca and I were talking, we were like, you know, it is really important to point out that, like, it's not easy work. Like, if solving this was easy, that gap would be closing a lot faster than it is, right? So you really have to be willing to and ready to do this work for the long haul and -- know that every step toward -- every step step towards better inclusion in the workplace is an important step in progress. But it's not going to happen overnight. And businesses really have to look internally as well as externally -- on the ways that they can impact things. You know, their external recruiting, their external marketing, their external community engagement -- how you're showing up in the community as a disability inclusive employer. But also internally -- your policies, your practices, your environments, your language and representation with internal documents and trainings. So it requires a lot of collaboration. You've got to get marketing on board, and IT, and HR, which is also talent acquisition, recruiting, and comp and benefits, facilities, and managers of departments. So there are so many opportunities for people to come together and bring their lived experience and bring their passions and make an impact. But you have to be very intentional in the work. And it can't be siloed initiatives, because we've seen it a number of times -- I'm sure Rebecca and their teams have seen it too -- you've got a passionate champion of this initiative or of this work, and they change positions, they change roles, they change companies, and then all of that progress gets stagnant or dwindles or disappears, because there's not a collective push within the organization. So I guess my takeaway from this is for you is there are a lot of people out there that could be bringing their talent to your organization, and it's important for you to find multiple champions within your teams that can build a voice of change, and start identifying places that you can advance the disability inclusion in your workplace. You have anything to add to that, Rebecca?

>> Rebecca Langbein: Yeah I would just say, and this is where universal design comes in, right? So you can go to the next slide, Eric, but before we get into really defining universal design that -- Meaghan's message is exactly what we want you to take away from this: universal design in and of itself is an iterative process and a collaborative process and an ongoing process. It's not like a, oh, I have a universal design checklist for my workplace, and I've checked all the boxes, and now we are done and everybody can come work here, and everybody will want to come work here, and everyone will stay working here forever. That's unfortunately not what we are here to tell you today. But with the concept of universal design, you do have the opportunity to start thinking about a lot of components of the workplace a little bit differently. So Meaghan, do you want to give them first little intro into universal design?

>> Meaghan Walls: Yeah. So you can go to the next slide, Eric. So as we look at these images, feel free to respond in the chat, put your hand up, make yourself visible to the group. But just thinking about, like, how many of you have ever used an automatic door opener on a building, right? Ridden a bike or used a a stroller down the curb cuts? Watched a video on closed captioning when you're supposed to be paying attention to something else? I'm pretty sure that happens all the time, right? And we know that you're sending a lot of text messages. But does anybody know -- and I do want you to put in the the chat or, you know, give us some feedback, but does anybody know where text messages developed?

>> Rebecca Langbein: I'm guessing I'm not allowed to answer?

>> Meaghan Walls: No, you're not allowed to answer.

>> Rebecca Langbein: Okay.

>> Meaghan Walls: But we're not -- I don't know if we're -- nothing in the chat so far, nothing in the chat so far. Well, then I get to be the one to tell you that the origin of text messages is rooted in universal design. So text messages developed with the development of cell phone technology. So back way -- Rebecca, you're probably even too young to remember, but back in the day when we had flip phones and we had to push a button three times in order to get the letter that we wanted, right, the very start of text messages -- that concept developed to allow people from the deaf community access to cell phone technology, mobile phone technology. And so it was a solution to a barrier for this community to use this technology. And what's happened over time is our society kind of lives and dies by it. It's all of -- it's our reminders from our car repair place, and our doctor's office, and our hair salon, and the pet's pickup place, and also the only way that many generations cross-communicate now, right, communicate across teams. So it's something that started as a solution to remove a barrier for a particular group of people, and has developed into something that, universally, we find beneficial, that we find inherent value in in our lives. And that's what these different examples of universal design or universal access are. All of these -- automatic door openers, curb cuts, text messages, closed captioning -- they all developed as a solution to remove a barrier for a group of people. And then there were mass -- there was mass benefit. Curb cuts were designed -- for individuals with wheelchairs to be able to cross the street, but they are beneficial for people on hoverboards, or scooters, or bikes, or delivery people, or strollers, or wagons, or people who have other non-wheelchair-related mobility challenges and gait challenges, and steps are -- stepping down a curb is a challenge. And so that's what we want you to think about universal design as. If you're like, okay, it might remove a barrier, solve a problem that's been identified, but down the road, is it going to have -- be beneficial and create better access for more groups. And we'll have some examples of some of the these things as we -- go through the rest of the slides. But that's -- and it's -- not always apparent what that long-term impact is going to be, but it's really that frame of mind. And as I share a couple of examples down the road it's -- it becomes an iterative conversation on thinking about the human experiences and all of the different user groups and challenges that may result in that environment or in that situation, and then thinking about and determining what changes can be made to remove that barrier and increase access. And then let's have that conversation again, and again, and ongoing as things evolve in our workplaces.

>> Rebecca Langbein: Exactly. Next slide please Eric. And one thing that Meaghan says all the time that I love is when we think about universal design -- say for example a curb cut like Meaghan was talking about -- not everybody "needs" quote a curb cut, but everyone can use a curb cut. So I think that that concept is really really essential and quintessential in the world of universal design. So universal design is a consideration of the diverse needs of people in this context in the workforce. And it's beneficial to workplace culture, employees, customers, and workforce development. And universal design is a kind of outside the box approach. So like I said before -- we have the Americans with Disabilities Act, the ADA. And that has really really specific, like, down to the inch specifications of how doorways should be measured and the distance that things should be placed from one another, and all of these very very specific criteria for how to make a place, a built environment, specifically quote "accessible." But that really doesn't capture the full diversity of human experience in the way that universal design does. So universal design is far less prescriptive than something like the Americans with Disabilities Act, and is far more outside the box, creative, flexible, culturally sensitive, and really more thinking about who are the people that are going to engage in this space? Who are the people that are going to go through this process? Who are the people that are going to live in this system that we are creating? And how can we create that process, that system, that physical space so that the most people possible can be -- can exist in that space, can participate in that system, etcetera. So universal design is also respectful of different learning styles, and even preferences. And universal design really is a key tool for moving beyond that compliance mindset. So like I said, contrasting that very compliance-feeling ADA measurement mindset, checklist mindset, universal design is not that. universal design is asking yourself who are the people that are going to work in my workforce? And what are the barriers they might face to do that? And -- how can I create physical spaces, processes, systems that are more barrier free for more people? And I think one of my favorite things about universal design is that at its most -- at its most simple sense, it is flexible design that allows a lot of different people with a lot of different needs and a lot of different preferences and a lot of different cultural styles and a lot of different backgrounds to participate in a space or interact with an object in a way that works for them, and in a way that all those different people can participate in that activity or use that product equitably. So in other words, providing support for people who need it, and -- breaking down barriers for people who may face barriers to accessing whatever that may be. And universal design is ever evolving. So, again -- it's -- oh, well, we removed this barrier because -- employee X had this barrier to working at the desk on level 2 in cubicle 5, and we remove that barrier for them. But we just hired someone new who's working on level 5 in cubicle 15, and they have a different barrier that we hadn't even thought of yet. And so we removed that barrier. And continuing to iterate on the process, and on the policies, and breaking down barriers as they come, and continuing to learn as you go. Next slide please, Eric. Ironically whenever I talk about universal design, I also like to talk about what it is not, because I think that it's really important to understand that universal design is not designing for disability. universal design is not a special requirement for the benefit of a minority of the population. It's not box checking. It's not prescriptive. And unfortunately it is not a magic potion. So saying we're going to do universal design now now is -- it's great and I love that ambition, but it's not actually going to make your workplace more inclusive tomorrow by just committing to "we're going to do universal design." Also the word universal design for me as a professional in this space is frustrating, because it is actually impossible to create something that is universally accessible or usable. There are so so many different people with a diversity of needs and barriers and experiences, that you're never truly going to create something that is universal. But instead I would rather you think about it as designing with the widest net possible. Casting the widest net possible with design so that people have options of how they go through a process or how they interact with an environment, and they have enough options that they can select the way that works best for them. So it's never going to work for every single person, no matter how hard you try. But casting the widest net possible with the design and being open to that iteration and that continual barrier breaking is what really makes it universal design, and is what's really going to make the difference for people at your workplace. Next slide please, Eric.

>> Meaghan Walls: Yeah, and -- I think that -- I do feel like we need to also comment that we're not saying -- don't do the things that are on the compliance side of things. Like, the thing with universal design is like it's about, yes, we're going to do the things that are required because they're required and most of them make a lot of sense, but universal design is about taking it -- not letting that be your ceiling, but letting that be your floor. Okay, we're going to hit all the things we need to do, we're going to be compliant, but -- our goal is actually up here, and we're not satisfied until we're further down this journey. Because, like, if there are any talent acquisition or compliance people on, like, don't worry -- compliance is still good. Compliance gives us a foundation to work from. So the example I want to share with you -- this story is-- really an example of how -- in applying this universal design lens or mindset to environments, processes, and how it can inform best practices that then ultimately create environments or cultures where there's less of a need to request accommodation. Things are just proactively put together to make sense and to work for all the different employee groups that come in. So in this particular example, and this is a case study from a manufacturing client. So -- the particular employee had been --was a medically discharged veteran. He had been in -- deployed overseas and he was a apache helicopter mechanic, right? So he's responsible for keeping helicopters functional in sandstorms. So let's just let that sink in. Like, takes a lot of -- precision and meticulous skills. So he was injured with an IUD and experienced a traumatic brain injury. And he went through two years of therapy before he was ready to venture back into the workforce. Okay? So he gets a -- gets a job as a mechanic running a machine in a coffee manufacturing distribution plant. And -- interview, great match, skill, background -- ready to go. And -- beginning of shifts on the -- his first days on the job, he is having trouble remembering the order of steps to operate the coffee sorting machine -- and so a few different times, co-worker or floor manager would get to the next step or start the machine up, so that they could -- progress through the steps. Obviously, frustrating experience. Managers kind of have two choices. They can step back and say -- we didn't see this, we really thought they were going to be ready, we can't work with this employee. Or they had the opportunity to say -- what can we do with the space that we have, the equipment that we have, to make this work? Turns out the manager goes home, and their high school student is studying for a test. And they've got in front of them a bunch of note cards as they're working through it. Manager takes five note cards, writes the steps down, hole punches them, puts them on a little ring, hangs it on the machine. Employee comes back to work the next day and gets to work, doesn't ask co-workers or managers to intervene, and they're off and running. Okay. Super low tech -- probably 55 cents in materials for this solution. So it was a great, easy, outside the box solution for this particular employee. But here's what happened -- here's where the universal design impact comes into -- play. Other co-workers at other machines were seeing this, and were like, hey, that's pretty helpful, that's pretty useful. And those five note card rings started showing up on different machines. And then they said, well you know it would make this easier if the instructions had pictures. So the next step was that they created laminated instruction sheets that had pictures with the instructions that went on all the -- machines. And -- then the realized impact down the road was shorter onboarding, and they had more cross-training that was possible, so they had to -- they had fewer shift gaps employment gaps -- and hiring bottlenecks. And the floor became more efficient. So, finding a solution, removing this barrier for this one employee that had the skills, had the know-how, and just needed some structure, turned into a beneficial practice across the floor that had organization-wide impact on hiring efficiency and productivity. And so little things -- if we think outside the box on how they can be applied, can have real significant impact on business operations. Next slide, Eric? So this is a little bit of a -- outside the box example of how this works. But this is -- more of a community impact story, but we promise we're going to tie it into the workplace. So I -- both Rebecca and I have mentioned there's a lot of different user groups, lived experiences, you know, just human experiences that come into play in different environments and programs and processes. And so trying to incorporate those lived experiences and needs into developing processes in space is really the crux of all of this. And I do -- one of the things that -- areas that I do work in is architectural consulting, because to help push that universal design lens into the built environments where people get very stuck on the compliance of what has to happen. And there's a community center that was doing a massive renovation of their entire facility, but a huge focus was in their aquatics area. And they had the best of intentions from the beginning. They said, "we want this to be a true community space" -- welcoming and inclusive to all of the people that live in this particular region of the city especially. And that included a very intentional focus around members with disabilities. And so in this aquatic space -- they had zero entry, they had ramp, they had steps, they had ladders, they had -- they invested in -- the electric lift chairs -- great intentions, best of intentions. But they focused on the end goal, the end location, and they neglected to think about some of the experiences along the way from when they come in the doors. So they were getting complaints from some of their older members who used mobility aids or some other wheelchair users, that the door into the aquatics room didn't have an automatic opener, and -- it was heavy and it closed fast, and they were struggling to get into the space. So it was creating this barrier to getting in to enjoy these features that were in the water in the aquatic area. But then going back another step in the journey from door to pool was the locker room. And they didn't update the locker room. And there were no spaces large enough for someone who needed assistance to get assistance, but also no privacy in a larger space where someone who needed assistance to get ready for the pool would have that space or that capabilities. So if you're someone who needs assistance to get ready for the pool, and you can't do it with dignity, you're not going to go. And so, thinking about that entire journey for their members -- was missing in the process, so that the end result of this barrier-free, beautiful space that they were creating could be realized. And so we had to talk through -- some of that, but it was really highlighting -- here are your -- here are your intentions, here's your end goal, but you can't neglect thinking about the touch points along the way to make sure that your outcomes are optimized. So that's what it looks like in a pool. But Eric, if you go to the next side, we promised we were going to tie it into the workplace.

>> Rebecca Langbein: Yeah, so exactly to Meaghan's point, when we think about how we can make workplaces more barrier-free or universally designed, it can't just be thinking about oh, well, if someone's going to work in this office, we should get them a desk with an adjustable height, we should get them -- a monitor that they can adjust where they want it to be, we can get them a nice keyboard that'll be -- that's great, and those are the -- that's the kind of flexibility you want to build into the working space. But there are also a lot of things that someone has to do before they can get into the office and start doing their job, or before they can get onto the manufacturing floor and do that job. So the very first step that you would want to think about on your universal design workplace journey would be job descriptions, because that's where people are going to learn about a job. And interestingly enough, there are a lot of things that are pretty commonplace in job descriptions that automatically create barriers for people. So -- Meaghan touched on compliance, which is so important. And compliance tells us we can't not hire someone because of their disability, and that's really important that that is codified. But that doesn't really help us to explore alternative, more accessible and inclusive means of writing job descriptions, so that people with disabilities can and do apply for our jobs. So when we're thinking about job descriptions, just some things to consider would be what language is being used? Interestingly enough, a lot of the job descriptions will include inherently ableist language. And there are actually online, like AI ableism checkers that you can run your job descriptions through that will provide you feedback on the types of words that you're using, and certain words that you would want to eliminate to make them more inclusive for people with disabilities specifically. Another thing that is a barrier that a lot of folks don't realize is the accessibility of the applicant tracking system itself, so the actual portal that is used to gather resumés and to publish those job postings. There are certain applicant tracking systems, for example, that just don't work with screen readers for people who are blind or low vision. And so that's something that you would want to investigate and make sure that whatever applicant tracking system you're using is accessible, and will allow someone who, for example, uses a screen reader to go on, to read the job description, to upload their resume and whatever else they may need. And similar to the first note about language -- are the job requirements truly essential? So you'll see a lot of things on job descriptions like "needs to be able to lift 30 pounds." I would encourage you to really think about does this person actually have to lift 30 pounds to do this job? Is that an essential function of this job? Or is that something that may happen, maybe, if three people are absent, and there's something's running late once a year, maybe this person needs to help move one box, maybe. That shouldn't be in the job description unless it's really truly something that is an essential function of the job, because pieces like that would make someone who can't lift 30 pounds say, oh, well this is not for me, even if that person could do every single aspect of that job except for lift a 30 pound box. Maybe there's another way they could lift that 30 pound box. You know, maybe there's a piece of machinery that they could use to lift that 30 pound box if they need to do it. Or maybe it's a piece of the job that could be swapped with a coworker. So just really think about for the job descriptions making sure that the things that you're calling essential really are essential. And that is a great way to break down some barriers. Next slide please. Similarly, in the interview process, there are a lot of things you could think about to break down barriers here as well. First off, the interview format. Is it a skill-based interview? Is it a conversational interview? And does the format that you're using match the job that will need to really be done? So if someone's going to be working behind a computer, not really talking to a bunch of people on a day-to-day basis, you know, maybe it's better to do a more skill-based interview where they're completing tasks that simulate the ones they would need to do on the job. Or if they're going to be working, say, in a hospital setting, on a hospital floor, could you take them to the floor where they'll be working so that they can actually tour the space and see the space? And this would allow someone the opportunity to identify from the get-go, that's something that I would need support with, or that's a barrier I would need to break down. You know maybe the -- maybe it's a hospital floor and the nursing stations are at really tall desks. A person could identify right from the interview, "you know, that's an accommodation I would need. I would need a shorter desk that I could work from at the nursing station." And that is something that would really really make a big difference for that person deciding whether or not they could take this job, and it's a really simple thing and could be identified at the interview if you give them the opportunity to explore the context, the space that they would be working in. Another couple of things to think about in the interview that really are universal design, because they support a lot of people, not just people with disabilities, is to share the questions in several formats. So maybe you're having a Zoom interview with someone and you're saying questions aloud to them. Would it be possible to also write the question in the chat, or to put the question on a shared screen on a slide deck? This would allow the person the ability to remember what they were being asked, and probably give them a better chance of responding really well to the question. And this is someone that would help someone who maybe has a hearing loss, or you know, cuts out for part of the question, but would also help someone who a trash truck drove by right in the middle of the interview when you were asking the question. So it's that flexibility that allows a lot of people to interact in that interview process in a way that shows -- gives them the opportunity to really show you who they are, and put their best foot forward. Similarly, allowing people time to process and respond to questions. Of course this supports people with different speech challenges and also cognitive challenges, if it takes them a little longer to come up with an answer. But let's be honest -- that serves everybody better when interviewers just have a little more patience, and leave a little more breathing room for processing and really formulating a good answer. So I think those are some universal design strategies that can be implemented really easily into the interviewing process, and would break down a lot of barriers for people. Next slide please.

>> Meaghan Walls: Yes, the universal design process. I'm just going to take it -- someone added in the chat: "adding to the conversation. Sharing the questions in advance can be particularly helpful for neurodiverse candidates. It can also help those with auditory processing challenges and others who may benefit from having extra time to prepare thoughtful responses."

>> Rebecca Langbein: Yes.

>> Meaghan Walls: Fantastic, and I mean, here's the thing. If -- unless the person that you're interviewing is going to be interviewed for their job, like, are you testing them on their interviewing skills, or do you want to know what they actually know? So it's thinking about how do you pull out that information they actually know, which I think all of us probably benefit from some extra time to think through all the things that are in our head that we know, and bring them -- bring them out. So thanks for sharing that Darren. So on the screen are two pictures -- one is an overview arial of a rendering of a playground. And then at the bottom left is a closeup of a 3D printed tactile map of a playground. So a little context for why I'm going to share about this is, for the last five and a half -- close to six years, I have been involved in an initiative up here in Omaha, Nebraska. I shouldn't say up here, because maybe it's down from where you're all at. But -- we've been -- Imagine Inclusion -- we've been on this journey to bring the largest accessible playground to Omaha, but also to an area of our city that 30 minutes was the closest accessible playground that we had. And it was -- there was massive amounts of growth, right? So the rendering up here -- this is our actual -- this is the playground that's under construction as we speak, finally. And I share this because we were so intentional about the level of inclusion and access that we were going to build into this space. And part of the reason we felt we needed to spearhead this project was because playgrounds that are just compliant, which frankly, is all that anyone ever strives for, are not accessible. Mulch is an ADA compliance surfacing, which is -- my daughter's -- my children are not disabled in the mobility aspect, and they trip and they get splinters and things like that, right? But anyone with mobility aids or gait challenges or balance -- mulch, ugh. Sand, terrible. Moms hate sand by the way. All moms hate sand. And so we were like, we're gonna do this. And we are going to include features and experiences -- we're going to think about all of the people that are going to come to the space. It's at one of our busiest parks in the city. So all that to be said is -- we were sharing information and people would be like, oh that's great, a playground for disabled kids. And we're like, yes, and their friends, and their siblings, and their classmates, and their grandparents with them, and their disabled parents, or caregivers, and friends yet to be made, right? So this is -- we wanted a space that was going to be engaging, and fun, and accessible, and inclusive, so that regardless of what group showed up together, everybody could engage. There were no questions about can I or can't I, or where can I and where can't I. Because sometimes you'll see rubber surfacing to some parts of the playground but not others. And so as we thought about how do we create this full -- full experience -- surfacing was a no-brainer. It's concrete and poured rubber. But we included high contrast zones where -- on the screen at, like, transition points where there's a lot of movement -- by the slides, the ramps, the swings -- we added a high contrast just to give that visual cue that like, hey, you might want to pay some extra attention, there's some stuff happening here. Shade -- we put so much shade, which is great for the parents that have to sit and bake in the sun, or the caregivers, but there's also a lot of medical conditions or medications that cause sun sensitivity and heat sensitivity. We put shade over the equipment, because how many times have you been to a play -- a park with a playground that nobody's playing on because it's hot and every surface is burning, right? That's good for nobody. We put in two ramps, one from each side, so that there was more organic flow of where people can go and how they can play. Some of those most exciting ones -- we have an in-ground merry-go-round round. I grew up in the generation of like those above-ground merry-go-rounds, about 18 inches below them, right? It's like that, but it's in -- flush in the ground, so you can step, wheel, roll, whatever you want onto it. And it's got seats and handles. And our socially inclusive wheelchair swing, where it's the same thing. We didn't -- a lot of times the accessible elements of playgrounds are isolated. You know, we talk about equitable experience, but it's about equitable experience together, not equitable experiences in different parts of the playground. And so this inclusive wheelchair swing has a bench on one side and an open area on the other, so you could stand over there, or a wheelchair could roll over and position itself. And so multiple people can be a part of it. And then the tactile sign for -- people who process through touch, or touch and vision, or -- with parents -- one of the them is like, yes, this is really cool. But if I was a parent who was -- had a vision impairment or who was legally blind, and we come to this playground for the first time, and my kids are like, "this is the best. I'm going to go to the swings." And I'm like, great. Where are the swings? This is an orientation piece to help with that information processing and that orientation for everybody. And so it was really thinking about all those different experiences, and not just the kids, that helped us design a space that's going to have opportunities and the full range of playground experience for the spectrum of users. And that's what can happen when you're intentional. And here's my favorite question -- if you take nothing away and you're like how do I start these conversations? Use the question "who does this not work for?" And then when you identify who it doesn't work for, work on removing that barrier. And then ask it again, and again. So that's my --

>> Rebecca Langbein: And again.

>> Meaghan Walls: And again. That's -- how you keep the progress moving in that universal design space.

>> Kevin McCloskey: All right, thank you so much Meaghan and Rebecca. I appreciate it. We have your contact information up on the screen now. Meaghan and Rebecca, if you want to add that to the chat, that would be awesome if you want to. But again, thank you so much, both of you, for your presentation today. I definitely learned a lot. That playground is also great for parents who are aging into a disability these days, so really great work there. And again, you could learn more about our upcoming events all throughout October and throughout the year at DisabilityBelongs.org. Again, thank you all for coming today, thank you to our speakers, and we'll see you next time. Thanks!

>> Rebecca Langbein: Thank you.

>> Meaghan Walls: Thank you.