



## **Blackrock, American Association of People With Disabilities and [Disability:IN](#) Facilitate Forward-Thinking Dialogue on Disability Inclusion with Investors and Global Inclusion Leaders**

New York, NY, Nov. 05, 2019 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE)

**New York, New York, November 5, 2019** - BlackRock, American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and [Disability:IN](#) convened a group of companies and investors at BlackRock for a private, half-day discussion on the issue of disability inclusion. [Recent research](#) from Accenture, AAPD and Disability:IN shows that when companies embrace best practices for employing people with disabilities, they outperform their peers, including 28 percent higher revenue, double the net income and 30 percent higher economic profit margins. Yet, more than 10 million people with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the workforce. According to the research, underutilizing this talent pool can significantly inhibit companies from creating sustainable, long-term value.

**Michelle Edkins, Global Head of BlackRock's Investment Stewardship team**, states "A company's approach to managing its employees can be a key driver of success and value creation. In a complex and fast-changing environment, it's invaluable to hear about best practices from a diverse group of practitioners, all eager to share their perspectives despite being at different stages of the inclusion and diversity journey."

Human capital management, including inclusion and diversity, has been a longstanding priority for BlackRock Investment Stewardship in its corporate engagements. BlackRock has the industry's largest investment stewardship team, which engages with thousands of companies each year on behalf of investors worldwide to advocate for governance best practices.

**Ted Kennedy, Jr. board chair of the American Association of People with Disabilities**, also facilitated the event. "People with disabilities present business and industry with unique opportunities in labor force diversity, corporate culture and as a large consumer market eager to know which businesses authentically support their goals and dreams. Leading companies are accelerating disability inclusion as the next frontier of corporate social responsibility and mission-driven investing."

Earlier this year, some of the country's largest institutional investors representing over \$2 trillion in assets under management released a [joint investor statement](#). Through the statement, the investors sought to "to encourage our portfolio companies to capitalize on the opportunities of disability inclusion" and to begin that process by "analyzing their disability

inclusion policies through a third-party benchmarking tool such as the Disability Equality Index (DEI).”

“We want the companies our pension fund invests in to be desirable places to work for everyone,” states **New York Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli**. “Studies have shown that businesses that commit to disability inclusion outperform their peers. Companies should seize the opportunity to join the growing number of corporations that recognize the benefits of disability inclusion and are reporting their efforts.”

“Bias is inherently inefficient. As a fiduciary, investor, and public official, I know that we can achieve better outcomes when we tap into the value of everyone’s contributions,” remarks **Connecticut State Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden**. “With mounting empirical evidence of the business case for inclusion, companies that embrace diversity and create inclusive corporate cultures will move to the head of the pack, and that’s where we want our investments to be.”

In September, Treasurer Wooden called on twenty of the Connecticut pension funds’ top holdings to incorporate best practices for disability inclusion in their workplaces.

BlackRock, AAPD and [Disability:IN](#) brought together some of the country’s leading ESG professionals and corporate sustainability officers with companies that are at the forefront of disability inclusion. Leading companies, including CVS Health and Voya Financial, shared their experiences and perspectives, with the goal of enhancing engagement on disability inclusion by sharing best practices on how companies can be more inclusive of people with disabilities and showing how investors can help drive this conversation.

"At Voya Financial, we know that disability inclusion — everywhere, including the workplace — is good for our customers, our employees and society," said **Voya Chairman and CEO Rodney O. Martin, Jr.** "People with special needs and disabilities have a right to equal opportunities — and they have a right to unlimited opportunities."

“We are grateful large institutional investors and leading corporations are elevating disability inclusion as a business priority. The event sparked a meaningful conversation on taking action to drive performance, and the benefit of using data and insight, like the Disability Equality Index, to determine a corporations’ commitment to inclusion,” said **Jill Houghton, President and CEO of Disability:IN**.

Companies can register for the 2020 DEI at [www.DisabilityEqualityIndex.org](http://www.DisabilityEqualityIndex.org).

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## **ABOUT BLACKROCK**

BlackRock's purpose is to help more and more people experience financial well-being. As a fiduciary to investors and a leading provider of financial technology, our clients turn to us for the solutions they need when planning for their most important goals. As of September 30, 2019, the firm managed approximately \$6.96 trillion in assets on behalf of investors worldwide. For additional information on BlackRock, please visit [www.blackrock.com](http://www.blackrock.com) | Twitter: @blackrock | Blog: [www.blackrockblog.com](http://www.blackrockblog.com) | LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/blackrock](https://www.linkedin.com/company/blackrock).

## **ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (AAPD)**

AAPD is a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities. As one of the leading national cross-disability civil rights organizations, AAPD advocates for the full recognition of rights for the over 60 million Americans with disabilities. Learn more at: [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com).

## **ABOUT DISABILITY:IN**

Disability:IN, formerly known as the US Business Leadership Network, is the leading nonprofit resource for business disability inclusion worldwide. Partnering with more than 185 corporations, Disability:IN expands opportunities for people with disabilities across enterprises. The organization and 31 affiliates raise a collective voice of positive change for people with disabilities in business. Through its programs and services, Disability:IN empowers businesses to achieve disability inclusion and equality, with the goal of advancing inclusion to the point when the organization is no longer necessary. Learn more at: [www.disabilityin.org](http://www.disabilityin.org).

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