

“Disability & Criminal Justice Reform: Keys to Success”

June 20, 2016

Watch video here: <https://youtu.be/qKIdfDV3oNI>

Learn more here: <http://respectabilityusa.com/new-report-shows-750000-people-with-disabilities-behind-bars/>

TRANSCRIPT:

EVELYN: Today I serve as a board member of Respect Ability. I would like to introduce our three speakers, who will each represent parts of the report they co-authored along with Philip Pauli, who is in the audience. I would also like to thank Lauren Appelbaum and David Perry for editorial assistance with the paper. After the panelists speak, they will take questions from you in the audience.

Please notice that there is a live captioning on the screen here, for those of you who like it.

The first speaker is Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi. She is the president of RespectAbility, a non-profit organization working to empower people with disabilities to achieve the American dream. She has published more than a hundred articles on disability issues, has met with 43 American Governors on employment for people with disabilities, and is a local champion for the 1-in-5 Americans who have a disability. Dyslexic herself, she also knows what it means to parent children with multiple disabilities.

Our second speaker is Eddie B. Ellis Jr., a Washington native and a reentry advocate, consultant, trainer, mentor and motivational speaker. As a returning citizen with a disability, Ellis' experience provides invaluable insight and depth into his work that allows him to connect with and engage the community in which he serves. He is the founder and CEO of Oneby1, an organization that works with communities and partners to provide youth development workshops and mentoring services to keep youth out of the corrections system and to help those exiting the system stay out. Ellis has also written and published several resource guides offering service referrals, practical tips and inspiration to former offenders and parolees returning to the Washington DC metropolitan area. He works hard to ensure that individuals reentering society are well informed and sufficiently equipped to make better choices for themselves and that they are truly given a second chance.

The actual recommendations from the white paper are laid out by Janie L. Jeffers, of Jeffers and Associates LLC. She served as Executive Deputy Director for the Federal DC Interagency Task Force at the White House OMB and also served as Policy Advisor for the President's Crime Prevention Council. From 1992-1996, she was Chief of the National Office of Citizen Participation for the Federal Bureau of Prisons at the Department of Justice and, from 1985-1991, she was the Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Correction, rising through the ranks to become the first civilian to achieve that position.

JENNIFER: So let me start by just talking about why this topic? Why is this so very, very important? Well, first of all is that one out of every...only five percent of the world lives in America. But 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population is in America. So we're talking about 2.2 million people that are currently incarcerated in America. And this is a 500 percent increase in people who are incarcerated over the last 30 years. And interestingly, Janie Jeffords and I worked on criminal justice issues decades ago and we presented at a panel literally 22 years ago. I looked at it because it's on C-SPAN, where Janie was predicting exactly this increase and exactly what was going to happen 22 years ago based on the policies that people were voting for. And so this is really a huge issue and we have to recognize that this disproportionate impacts people of color. That 60% of people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. And there's been a lot of attention to the fact of the racial lens in the justice issue, but not to the disability, not to the disability issues. But we have to recognize that one out of every three American adults now has a criminal record. That's one out of every three. And that 10 million of America's children have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives. And this weekend as many of us celebrated Father's Day, there were many American children whose fathers were behind bars. Yet three quarters of the people who leave, and by the way 95 percent of the people who are currently incarcerated eventually will leave. 95 percent will leave, but a really big challenge is that the system is so broken that fully three quarters of them will be re-arrested and two thirds of them will be re-incarcerated sometime within five years. Three quarters. So this is very clearly a very broken system. I know that there's been a lot of focus also on costs. We're talking about a system that costs 80 billion dollars a year. But I would really put forward that the cost is way greater than the 80 billion dollars, because you've got the lost productivity of 2.2 million Americans who are currently incarcerated.

So what do we need to know that is going to help us do things differently, because as I said Janie and I were on a panel 22 years ago, what's going to change that it isn't going to be worse decades from now? And what is it that we really have to know? So by coincidence I happened to watch a great movie last night called "The Big Short". I don't know if any of you have seen "The Big Short". But it's about the housing bubble in America and there were some really interesting things about it. One is that all the data and all the facts, that there was going to be a collapse were all there with publicly available data. It's just that people weren't looking in the right place with the right lens and so it's very important to think about this Mark Twain quote, which they used, which "it ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that just ain't so". And I really do think that when we think about criminal justice, that people are very sure about a lot of things where they are missing very important components that would change the outcomes of how the system works so that we can make things for the better.

Whenever I look at public policy, I always look at the theory of change. What is it that you are going to do that is going to make that engine of progress, move

forward? And I'd like to think of it as a steam engine. A steam engine only moves when you hit the boiling point because it requires a steam, which means that it won't move until the water is 212 degrees. We have a lot of policies that might get to 50 degrees, to a hundred degrees. But they are not getting us to the 212 degrees to move forward, to make progress, to reduce the recidivism rate and reduce the indignity and human injustices that are happening in the system. So we really have to look at the theory of change. It's the A plus B plus C equals D. What are you going to do with the different elements of public policy that are going to give us a different and better outcome? Because it's not just about recognizing the facts- and we have a lot of facts in this document. It's about what do we need to do differently to get a better outcome? And when we look at that theory of change- that blueprint of what it is that needs to be done-, you can really test, you should be able to test the best practices and see are you getting the better outcomes or are you just spinning your wheels and giving sound bites for the camera, but actually making things even worse? You should be able to test public policy- and you really can- to see if you were to spend more money, would that make things better? If you were to cut spending money on something, would that make things worse? So it's very, very important to have testable hypotheses and to be sure that we're moving things forward. Because what we do know for a fact is that things are getting much, much worse.

Now when you look at the pathways or the cycle of justice involvement, I would like to thank the Arc- and there's some people from the Arc who are here- for this model. It shows the different, sort of timeline of the first contact in the community, the investigation, the jail, the travel, the trial, the plea, the agreement, the transition in the community, all the different times when you need to take into account disability issues when you think about criminal justice reform issues.

So, how many people are we talking about? So, it's actually very difficult to pin down a number. One of our key recommendations is for better data. We do see a lot of studies that say that the majority of prisoners are people who have mental health differences, that the majority of incarcerated inmates have addiction issues but, there are many other issues that people don't talk about that are incredibly, incredibly important and in many cases predate and are causal to mental health issues or to addiction issues. So, 32 percent of people in prison report having at least one disability, 40 percent of those in jail. It totals up to over three quarters of a million people who have disabilities who are behind bars. So, what are the different disabilities?

First of all, I'm very pleased that we have a screen reader in back of me that people who are hearing impaired can follow what we are saying because there are literally approximately 150 thousand people who are currently incarcerated who are either deaf or hearing impaired. There are literally 150 thousand people that are incarcerated that are either blind or have vision impairments. And you have this very large number of people, 500 thousand with cognitive impairments. And we're going to talk a lot more about cognitive impairments because I think that in all the

research that we did that this was, to me, the most interesting fact that was new of all the data that we saw.

Self-care is also very important and independent living; people who would use a wheelchair have mobility issues. People who have multiple disabilities would fall into those categories. And so we're talking very large numbers of people, not just one or two anecdotes but 750 thousand people. We have to understand that disability is very non discriminatory and it impacts people of all races, genders, you know backgrounds. And that 51 percent of Americans have a loved one with a disability or are a person with a disability themselves: one in five Americans has a disability. One in five, that's 20 percent of our population. And we have to understand the definition of disability. A disability is an impairment that impacts something important to your daily living. So it can't be, you know, something really small that doesn't impact your daily living. It has to be very significant to count, but it doesn't have to be something that you can visually observe. And this is one of the big problems in incarcerations, people with cognitive disabilities. Because you can't see them, people think that they are faking it. There is a lot of misunderstanding around the non-visible disabilities. People can see if you're blind or you're deaf or you use a wheelchair. But, if you have a cognitive disability, they can't see the disability and it's very, very important to recognize how those impact everything as we think about the criminal justice process.

And I want to give a case study that everyone will be familiar, I'm sure, with a story of Freddie Gray who tragically was killed while he was in police custody. But, how did he get to the point that he was in police custody: a young African American man who lived in a house with lead paint. He developed these cognitive disabilities. He did not have the ability to follow multi-step instructions. This is a disability called an Executive Function Disorder that happens frequently from lead paint poisoning or from lead water, as we will see in Flint, Michigan sadly in the years ahead. And what that means is that frequently people throughout his life thought that he had defiance because he didn't follow multi-step instructions. But the issue wasn't that he wasn't wanting to follow instructions, it's that he couldn't. And what is so very, very important is to understand that when you have a young child with these kinds of disabilities, they can learn and their brains can literally rewire. Literally brains can rewire in children to overcome certain things.

And I'll give you an example as a parent. One of my children who's a stroke survivor, when she was younger, she could not hear and move at the same time. Her brain could only process one or the other at the same time. She could hear fine. She could move fine. She could not do them at the same time. But because of early intervention, she can do both extremely well. And that is really, really important to understand that brains are rewiring until an individual is 21 years old. But if it is not addressed because they didn't diagnose it and it didn't get the early accommodations, the brain fixes, those disabilities are lasting and it has a lot of impacts in terms of why people like Freddie Gray wind up getting killed. Because if somebody says to somebody who looks suspicious, put your hands on your head,

turn around and drop to the ground, that is a three-step instruction. And somebody can get confused and put their hands on their hips causing the police to think that they are reaching for a weapon.

So, more than a third of the individuals who have been killed by the police are individuals with disabilities, more than a third. And this is a disability that impacts things tremendously inside prison because there's a lot of complex instructions that prisoners are given where they don't give them visual cues by putting them in pictures. And I'm going to give you an example of that. If you go to Starbucks, you can see that there is instructions that you should wash your hands and there are actually pictures in how to wash hands. There are people who need pictures to learn and to follow instructions, and by offering something as an accommodation, as simple as showing a picture of the expectation, you can get the desired outcome. But without the picture, the individual literally cannot follow the instructions. So, this is an accommodation that is very important, as you'll hear from Janie.

>> In our white paper, you'll see that there's a glossary with a lot of terms and there's a lot of people here who work either in corrections or criminal justice, or you work on disability, there aren't too many people who work on both. I'd like to highlight a couple terms. Ableism is the idea that people with disabilities are somehow less than people without disabilities. And there's tremendous stigma around disability. You'll see in the popular movie "Me Before You" where the happy ending of the movie is that the individual who has multiple disabilities commits suicide because it's better to be dead than to live with disabilities.

Ableism is very pervasive throughout all of America. It is particularly a problem inside minority communities because people who already have one minority feel they are already being persecuted or looked down on because they are African American or Hispanic. They are not looking to add another label that might cause there to be another ism towards them. And so, this is something that we really see. Another term that I think is particularly important is intersectionality. Intersectionality is when you have the combination of racism and ableism together or sexism or for people from the LGBTQ community who also have disabilities. There are tremendous overlaps that you really have to take a look at, that impact things in so many different ways. And we'll go back to the fact that 32 percent of people in prison, 40 percent of those in jail self-report a disability. 95% eventually will leave, but within five years, three out of four of them will be back incarcerated again. So, what are some of the antecedes? Sexual abuse of children is known to be a precursor of committing sexual abuse later. This is a very important issue.

I, myself, am dyslexic. I could not read or write until I was at least 12. I was not diagnosed until I was 14. Faced tremendous bullying, tremendous bullying, had very low self-esteem. And when I was 12, I trusted somebody at school and wound up being raped. This is unbelievably common, unbelievably common. It is happening across our nation all the time. Children with disabilities are three times more likely

to be victims of rape or sexual assault than children without disabilities. And it keeps happening when they are adults. So every nine minutes an adult with a disability is sexually assaulted. And for half of the individuals with cognitive disabilities, by the time they're adults, they've been sexually assaulted on average 10 times or more, 10 times or more. People with disabilities, not surprisingly, are twice as likely also to be victims of other kinds of crime than people without disabilities. And a third, as I mentioned in the Freddie Gray case, of all use of force incidents with the police are with disabled civilians. 67 percent of those who are in state prisons have failed to complete high school. There is a tremendous correlation between failure to complete high school and going into the justice system.

People with disabilities who do not get, you know, their accommodations, who hasn't received degrees, 59 percent of them have a speech disability, 66 percent learning disability, you know, you have these very significant correlations between disability and failure to achieve a high school diploma. And in fact if you look at who finishes high school in America, on average 80 to 81 percent complete high school and you can see that for African Americans it's only 69 percent. But for people with a disability, it's only 61 percent. But if you are African American or Hispanic and you have a disability, the likelihood that you will complete high school is very small and the likelihood that you will wind up being incarcerated increases and increases. As I said, there's a 20-point gap between people with and without disabilities high school attainment. And very important to think about school suspensions. And this, a lot of it goes to these non-visible disabilities. It's the individuals who have the Executive Function Disorder for whom their teachers think they are being defiant because they are not following multi-step instructions and suspend them when in fact they should have been given their instructions one at a time or also in an individual format that wind up being suspended. And once a child is suspended, their likelihood of not completing school goes up tremendously. And I know there's been important work in this Committee, the HELP Committee on school suspensions. And we really think it's deeply important. But as Eric Jacobson said, boys of color are diagnosed with behavioral disorders while white kids get diagnosed with Autism. And there is tremendous disparity in the African American, Hispanic and other minority children are not getting the diagnosis that they need and they are getting suspended and they are failing to complete school. These are the kinds of disabilities that people have in school. And you'll see, if you dig even deeper, the disparity in race in terms of, you know, who's getting the right Individual Education Plan done for them. And also once the plan is done, the school system doesn't always implement the plan and parents had to advocate for those children. Some of you may have seen the movie "Dory" over the weekend and you see these great disability themes and you see the parent who's really trying to do the scaffolding, the teaching of the skills, so that, so that people can, well, in this case fish, can be successful. The truth is that that needs to happen for children also, that they need to have those accommodations so they can build those skills and scaffolding so they'll be independent and they'll be successful.

And you can really see what kind of disabilities exist in our population. Cognitive disabilities are what is most prevalent in America's children amongst people with disabilities. And there's also obviously college gaps, and every year 300 thousand Americans with disabilities graduate or leave the school system, far too few with a diploma, 300 thousand. Only one in three working age Americans with disabilities has any job, one out of every three. There's 22 million Americans with disabilities, only one in three has a job. I'll just mention that 400 thousand of those who have a job are working in sheltered workshops where it's legal to pay subminimum wage. So not surprisingly people with disabilities are the poorest of the poor people in America. I know that when people think poverty they think people of color. But they need to be thinking people with disabilities of all colors. Because the demographics are very clear in the Census Bureau that people with disabilities are the poorest of the poor. And if you are a person of color with a disability, obviously that's compounded. Again, 70 percent outside of the workforce. And the labor force participation rate is their progress. I talked about the theory of change. You see this line, the blue line, I mean the purple line at the bottom is the labor force participation rate for people with disabilities. It's getting worse. Things are getting better, not good enough, they're getting better for African Americans, Hispanics and for women. They are improving. They are substantially higher than the bottom line, which is individuals with disabilities. I need to move faster.

So, we have them broken down by state. So you can get all the data if you are from a different member of Congress or Senate's office. We have all the data broken down by state, and you can pull that from the website where it's posted. And we really have to focus on these disconnected youth who are very much at risk for going into the school to prison pipeline. And you have to understand that there are places where things are better than others. So, if you look at North Dakota, for example, in North Dakota over 50 percent of people with disabilities have a job. Whereas in Baltimore, only 25 percent of people with disabilities have a job. Now some people say "well that's really a racial dynamic because Baltimore is an African American city and North Dakota is a white area." However, if you really look at the gap between people with and without disabilities and their employment rates, the worse state in the country is actually Maine. Maine has, by a fair amount, the worse numbers in the country for the gap in labor force participation rate. And look at the terrible numbers for some other states that are predominantly white, like Vermont. So you cannot take a look at this data and say this is all about race. There are different policies that you can have that will bring better outcomes and we need to be moving to those.

There are great programs like Project Search and others that enable 70 percent of people with disabilities to be able to have competitive integrated employment. I'm really proud of the fact that Philip Pauli and our team did tremendous work to find best practices and in our report, you will find, thanks to Nathan and Max and the entire team that hunted down best practices around the country, lots of different programs that you can investigate. And you can see the demographics of the population that is incarcerated. I do think it's important to note that there's a

dramatic increase in women who are incarcerated in America. Huge increases of women who are incarcerated and that cognitive disabilities are a massive factor in terms of who's incarcerated amongst women.

Just going to sort of zip away and forward and bring to the human scale Joseph Heard is an individual who is deaf. And in jail he was not given access to appropriate accommodations, so much so, that his legal counsel could not communicate with him. He was released from prison and told he could go home to the community because nobody communicated that in American Sign Language, he did not know it. And he went back to his prison and stayed in prison for another two and a half years before somebody told him that he actually could leave prison. He served an extra two and a half years because nobody gave him his accommodation to let him know that he had served his time. You look at individuals like Paul Schlosinger and Arthur Johnson and Christopher Lopez who all have, you know mental health disorders and whose lives were lost because of the horrific way that people with mental health differences are treated in prison. And I will tell you that one of the most inhuman things is the fact that there's more than 90 thousand Americans in solitary confinement, at any given moment. And that many of them are there because of disabilities that if somebody is deaf or blind, it is incredibly common that their accommodation is solitary confinement with no interactions with other human beings, as Eddie will talk about in his presentation. For Amir Baraka who testified in this very room who's dyslexic you know. really tells the story of somebody who was failed by the system, and put into the school to prison pipeline.

Criminal justice reform will not succeed unless we address it in all stages of the process. That's the early intervention. It's the adequate accommodations and the ability to learn new skills when people go through proper process and the reentry. And so I'm very proud that our team has put together some very specific recommendations, which Janie is going to go through that has links to it, but first I'm going to turn it over to my colleague and co-author, Mr. Eddie Ellis.

EDDIE: Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I want to thank you for coming. I'm a native Washingtonian. I'm very nervous. This is the first time I'm ever talking publicly about my disabilities. That's why I'm here. Because I've talked about my life in other stages, but never about my disability.

When I was young, I was diagnosed with Dyslexia and I never understood why I saw numbers different, certain words different. And I was explaining to my teachers. Most of my teachers just said 'just do the work'. And my mother went to go get me tested again and took the papers to the school. And I never received the help that I needed when I was in school. For a while when I was young, I was very interested in education, but I lost it because I felt no one would listen to me. You know, I felt different than everyone in the school. I felt different the way that I received things and the way that I, you know, I did my work.

And so, around the age of 16, I was locked up for manslaughter in Washington D.C. I was defending myself, and I was locked up, and someone lost a life. And from that point on, my life changed as I knew it. I didn't want to take anyone's life. I shouldn't have been in the street. You know, I was suspended from school for not doing my work, not being able to follow certain things I was being told. And when I was locked up, I remember a person doing my presentence report and they said Eddie's [indiscernible], he should be sentenced to the fullest of the law. He will never change again in his life. And, it really hurt me a lot because I remember hearing when I was young from certain teachers you will never be anything. You will never amount to anything. And sometimes, you tell people certain stories, they start to believe it. And I started to believe it, despite what my mother told me, my grandparents told me. I started to believe in negative things. I was sentenced to 22 years. I was found guilty of manslaughter, sentenced to 22 years, in 1991 when I was 16 years old. And I didn't understand, you know, most of the things that was taking place in court.

And my lawyer would ask me, now do you understand? I would say yeah. Because I didn't want to feel like I didn't understand.

And I remember, you know, when I was young, I got in a lot of fights, you know, defending myself when people made fun of me when I didn't understand things in school. So I didn't want to be made fun of again when I was going through this traumatic situation.

While in jail, I got in trouble a lot. Certain things I didn't understand. I couldn't get into the education system like I wanted to, because jail was very dangerous. And for those who never done time in jail from the outside may see things very different. Jail was very dangerous. I was over in Virginia, a lot of people was getting stabbed, assaulted, and a lot of other things. And while in jail, I tried to go through the education process as best as I could. But the teachers that were there, I believe personally that they did their best. But, it was a lot of us with the same problems, with Dyslexia. And a lot of teachers couldn't educate us the way we needed to be educated. And I don't want to put everything on the teachers. Because I believe some of my teachers throughout my life did the best that they could with what they had. And while in jail, I served 15 years, and 10 years in solitary confinement. And out of the 10 years in solitary confinement, I did six years in the highest level prison in the United States, ADX in Florence, Colorado. And while housed in ADX and other maximum security prisons, I wasn't allowed to do a lot of things. Wasn't allowed to have a lot of materials to read and write and things of that nature. But, I started to want to change my life. And I don't know what came over me, but something did, and I wanted to change. I wanted to be a better person. And I started requesting books. I started reading more. I took my G.E.D. Failed it three times, you know, and it was the math section. I failed three times by one point. And I told my teacher, I said I really think you changed something on my test. Because it's impossible for me not to pass three times by one point.

So, you know, but while in prison, you know, being held in solitary confinement, you

know, I think my social skills went down the drain. You know, I couldn't really socialize with people. My eyesight started going bad. My long-term vision started going bad, because I wasn't using it. And coming home, I didn't know how to adjust to the community. I didn't know how to use the Metro system. I didn't trust people. I didn't want to talk to people. But while I was in jail in 1997, I was assaulted by some correctional officers in private prison in Youngstown, Ohio, and I remember one of the officers said he's having a seizure. And I woke up, blood in my mouth. They took me to medical unit, nothing happened. They didn't give me no medication. No test was ran or anything.

So, a few years go past, I remember some friends of mine saying I remember you talking to me. And it's like you go into a daze and then you come out. And I'm just thinking about something that I really don't know what is happening. I came home in 2006. Around 2008, 2009, I was in [indiscernible] with my best friend. And I remember her saying I'm taking you to the hospital. And I'm like, for what? She said you just had a seizure. And I said no, I didn't. She said you're going to the hospital, you just had a seizure. I argued with her I didn't have a seizure. She saw something there. I went to the hospital in Laurel. They said I was diagnosed with having epilepsy in my frontal lobe. You know, I'm like, wow. For me, I felt that not only do I have a felony on my record, I'm now diagnosed with a disability, another disability, and I went into a depression stage for approximately a year, being in denial about what was going on. And I had several seizures after. And now, I told myself, I really have to take this serious. You know, in 2006, I was diagnosed with PTSD. And funny thing about that is a friend of mine was coming from seeing a doctor and he was upset and the counselors were talking to him, but they were scared to really touch him. I said what is wrong? He said, man, they diagnosed me with PTSD. I started laughing. And he said, you know, if I got it, you got it. I said don't give it to me. I don't have it. They said you had it. [Laughter]

And the next day, they said I had it, when I took my test. And I was in denial. I really didn't want it. I really didn't want to be diagnosed with, you know, PTSD. So I asked my best friend, who was a social worker, to send me books. I was in a program at the time. She sent me books. And I read up on it. I said, well, truth of the matter is I do have PTSD. But what happened after reading it, it strengthened me to understand why I'm going to Safeway, why I'm going to church, and having panic attacks. I went to my doctor one day. I said, man, I went to church and the usher asked me to go in this aisle. And when he touched me, I had a panic attack. He said, well, I'm going to talk to you about dealing with your panic attacks. He talked with me about dealing with my panic attacks.

But from 1997 to 2006, I never received medication in jail for seizures. But I've been taking it since 2008. I've been taking the medicine. So it's something that has affected me personally on both levels. What happened with disabilities and with being in prison. And I can tell you personally, I've been in state, federal and private prisons, and no prison I've been in had been equipped to really deal with people with disabilities, but they house people with disabilities. And like Jennifer said, I've

seen many people with different disabilities be taken advantage of in jail, because they are not protected the way they should be protected.

And, just because a person has certain disabilities, they are locked down and put in solitary confinement because of their disability, because the jail is not equipped to hold them. And it's wrong. Because somebody has a disability, that you lock them down and have them locked in a cell and not be able to do what they need to do in these situations. And since I've been home, you know, solitary confinement, the situation has affected me in a major way. I mean, I used to eat my dinner, breakfast and lunch in my room. My mother cooked, I would get my food, go to my room. That's what I was used to. Until one day I heard my mother tell my younger brother, just leave him alone. He's upset. And I told my mother, I said Mom, I'm not upset. I said, you know, I'm just so used to eating in the cell, that's what I'm continuing to do. And my mother told me you got to get out of that, you know, you have to eat with us. You know, you have to learn to break out of it. You know, and when I came home, you know, I've been blessed to be able to step out of, you know, my disabilities, even though I live with them every day, step out of me being an ex-felon.

And I've created materials to help people that's coming home from prison, give them information to, you know, fight this situation because it's hard, it's hard. When you come home, everything moves so fast, you don't know what to do. You don't have the information. You go to jail, they give you pamphlets to say what not to do. They don't give you anything when come out that say what you should do. When I came out, they gave me a reentry program of banking skills and I was broke. So it was useless. It was useless. And I can tell you if I didn't have it in me to fight for myself, and to find the people around me to want to help me, my family and other people, I would have been back in prison. I can assure you, I would have been back in prison. You know, but I stayed on course.

It'll be my tenth year home. Haven't been in trouble. I've created my own organization. I've been able to go across the United States and, you know, lecture on different things. I've had an opportunity to train probation officers, some lawyers, some social workers, and, you know, and it's something I've been very proud of. You know, but I can tell you that I don't have a week that I don't deal with my past. It's something I don't hold onto in a negative way. I take responsibility for what took place, whether I was protecting myself or not. Each day that I've been able to do something in the community for me giving back to a person that lost his life, his family in my community. I don't do anything out of guilt. I do everything because it's the right thing to do. But I'm here to say that things need to change in the system when it comes to dealing with people with disabilities and when they coming out of the system. Because when I came out of the system, nobody told me, Eddie that you have a disability. Because I was in denial to accept the fact that I was diagnosed with Dyslexia when I was young. And because I wasn't diagnosed with having seizures and epilepsy when I was in jail because they never tested me, I never accepted it. It took me a year and a half to accept the fact that I had

Dyslexia. And that bothers me, and then I forget about it. I don't understand why I forget about it. I try to do a lot of brainteasing things, but I still forget.

But I'm here to tell you that this fight is very important. And if we think that we can just fight one part of the criminal justice system when it comes to reentry, we're going to fail. We're going to fail. And when I came home, that was one of my main points, please help people with disabilities. And I can tell you: most people never listen to me. And I've worked with federal and state paroles when I've been home, most people never listen to me. But now I'm seeing that it's coming to light, that people need to pay more attention to everybody. But I can tell you that those of us with disabilities are really being looked over in a lot of ways. Thank you.

JANIE: So, combat stigma, how do you do that? First it's the mindset--there are things that I am going to actually read. But I've made observations in 40 years of having worked in New York City, having worked in Colorado, and federal bureau prisons and the White House. I've had a wide perspective of this issue. And I'm just so happy that my good friend--that it turns out my good friend, brilliant Jennifer, is going to join hands with others who've been working in this field to elevate this problem because--this issue, I'm not going to label it a problem but an issue that's looking for a solution, because I can tell you particularly when I was at Rikers Island, so many inmates were there, were the highest rate of victims, and they didn't report it because they had been abused for so long and so often they didn't even think there was anything wrong with that treatment. And that's something that you have to think about. People have been abused for so long and so often, they think that is the way life should go and we're going to do our best to join with others to lift the voices up for those who cannot articulate it on their own.

So, combating the stigma around disability, particularly through cultural competence areas, my background is also in social work and cultural competence is important. You need to know what you are talking about and particularly when you are talking to someone, you need to convince them that you have some depth of knowledge about it. But these programs are for parents, and caregivers, and grandparents, et cetera. And it starts really with us in this room that when you pass someone on the street who is not acting quite the way that we should in our suits and ties and all, don't judge that person because we don't know necessarily what experiences have brought them to that point. Sexual assault and abuse, take steps to address sexual assault. I know Eddie could probably give you examples and so can I that it is more pervasive among the disabled. It goes on in prisons and jails without exception. And most of you guys know jails are the short-term detention stay where you are going through the court process. And prisons are the place you go to serve longer periods of time, technically a year and a day counts as a prison. So, one of the things that we talk about is how do we address the issue of sexual assault? One is to let people know that they should be free from that behavior and that if you are violated and someone touches you, I don't care how little or tall you are, in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable, then that's bordering on the issue of sexual misbehavior that is unwanted. And then it progresses and more so, if you will. So,

one of those things that we need to do is to continue to bring light to it and then find remedies. I won't read the ones that are there because you can read for yourself, but they're excellent. Her team has gone about, Jennifer and Philip and her team have really included some excellent excellent resources that I would ask you to follow-up on. Definitely reforming the broken educational policy. I'll just use an example, when my son was a little guy, they believed he was dyslexic.

Now he liked to read but he couldn't--comprehension was an issue. So we went to the counselor, and immediately they wanted to put him in a -- label him as having a problem and put him in a certain category. Well, you know, I'm reasonably educated, reasonably aggressive when it came to my kids, so I fought that. I was able to fight that successfully. But I thought about all the other parents lined up in the hall who didn't have the wherewithal, whose kids were put in slow track, who were labeled immediately without even taking the steps, as you said, that could preclude that. I mean Jennifer did wonderful things with one of her children to mitigate those circumstances and if there's intervention early enough, so those are the things that we need to do to offset the negative impact on students, particularly students of color, and the two are intersecting without question, disabilities and color.

Improve mentorship programs and expand early work experiences to empower youth with disabilities. I sum that up in saying that everybody needs to be successful at something. Everybody needs to have something that they can say I do this well. Everyone needs to feel good about themselves and frequently that is through some expression of work, whether it's art or whatever it is. But we all need to be successful in some area. And one of the ways that we do that is by saying I'm going to find you the help that you need, provide you with the resources and whatever that [indecipherable] is, and again ask you to--refer you to the excellent resources in the different programs that they outline here. I won't read them to you. But they are there and there are many times when I was with the Bureau of Prisons and we would ask people to help and they would, and I'd say great, why weren't you doing this? They said well, nobody's ever asked me before. So you would be amazed at what you're able to access by simply just reaching out looking for the assistance that you need.

This one is so important, ending criminalization of homelessness. I fail to understand how not being able to have a home, which is--Maslow's theory of hierarchic needs for those of you who got soc and psyc background-- the first thing you need to maintain human life is shelter. So most people who are, are aware of their circumstances know that they need shelter. So people don't necessarily intentionally become homeless. So how do we combat that? How do we stop criminalizing and sweeping the streets? I mean I can almost guarantee you Cleveland, and where's the other one, Philadelphia, they're going to sweep the streets. They're going to take all the homeless, and Charlie will know this and others in here, they are going to sweep the streets of all the people who are labeled undesirable, and the first group primarily are the homeless. And they're going to be

in the prisons, the jails rather, and be detained or held or given bus tickets or all the other strategies that different municipalities use. I know of what I speak. I've seen it. I've experienced it. And it still exists. So, what we need to do is decriminalize it. First of all, it shouldn't be considered the fact that you're undomiciled breaks no laws that I understand. Reform policing, and I think there have been a number of things that have occurred in the last four or five years that have said we need to change the way we police in general and specifically with the disabled. In the '70s the mental hygiene law changed. It said you can no longer be held against your will if you are not a threat to yourself or someone else. So you know about Saint Elizabeth's or other parts of where you come from, that changed.

So what happened, the mental institutions dumped out, and I mean dumped, into the streets thousands of people who had never been on their own before. And so what the legislation required was for the resources, community resource centers to be open to treat the people who are now in the community. It did not happen. In some places they were more successful than others. But in the larger urban areas, these people just dumped on the street with no resources, not knowing how to fend for themselves. Many of them have been in there their whole lives, had no family contact. So it's no mystery that they left the prisons and jails and then found themselves on the streets not understanding, as Jennifer said, complex orders or even the basics, found themselves arrested coming back into the jails. And in the 70s and the 80s, there used to be a big slogan, the jails and prisons are the new mental institutions. So it's not just the mental capability issue now, it's also the physical, mental impairment, all the disability factors are now emerging because all of these issues are now coming into the criminal justice system, and have been for quite awhile.

Let juvenile justice lead somewhere, I love the way this is phrased because what it generally is a pipeline. They are feeders. There was a study done, I think by the National Policy Institute, there're zip codes, we know exactly where the people come from who come into our jails and prisons. There are zip codes that keep this beast called the criminal justice system going. And now that there are for profit--and I'm sorry, I'm a capitalist at heart, I'm not opposed to that. But the profit motive has been introduced into criminal justice. I think many of you may know of the judge up in Pennsylvania sentenced to 28 years because he was sentencing young people to a prison that he was an investor. So if you think that's an isolated incident, it isn't. There are policies that have been enacted and have been influenced by people who benefit from them. So, juvenile justice should not be a feeder system. Juvenile justice should not be the track that you get promoted from being in a juvenile facility to an adult. And we say school to pipeline, I think the Children's Defense Fund talks about from the crib, from being a kid all the way up to becoming captured by the criminal justice system because if you ingest lead, and many people who live in low income circumstances live in older places, so they don't get the services, I mean so they go from there to school, from literally being in a crib eating into school not being able to function, to juvenile justice and then up to the adult system. We know exactly where most of the people, when they come into our jails and prisons,

where they come from. And I don't think we are going to talk about felony and disenfranchisement, but believe me, prisoners have a value beyond just the conversation that people are paid. When I was at the Bureau of Prisons, we had communities putting together amazing campaigns to get us to build in their community, not just because they brought jobs, it bought votes.

Because the way the legislation in most states is written now, the person incarcerated gets counted as part of the residents of that community. So don't think that it's just about the dollars and cents in terms of compensation, but there are greater aspects of the two. Not from the person originally--where they're originally from, they get counted in the census for that local jurisdiction. But I won't talk about that so much today. That's something that I think we'll need to ___.

Alternative sentencing-- It makes sense for so many--expand alternative--it makes sense for so many reasons. Jails and prisons are expensive places. I left New York City in 19--fiscal year 1991 actually. It cost New York City, which is, it's an outlier, 90 thousand dollars a year to maintain a prisoner. Oh, isn't that ___. Now think about that. That was 25 years or so ago. And imagine what that kind of investment could do in another area.

So jails and prisons are expensive. And they don't lead to the outcome that alternative sentencing leads to. You can get youth, and particularly with the youth, there's behavioral changes that can be modified at an early age, and early intervention. And that's the dollars that we use in incarceration as opposed to that. Reform in the courts requires looking to ways for wrongful convictions, false confessions, it goes the gamut in terms of particularly the criminal justice system you have, I don't know if that's me or not, you have defendants who cannot participate in their own defense because they don't understand the charges against them and just as you said, many of them don't want to acknowledge it, so they'll go, yes, I understand. You stand before the judge, it's a plea bargain which, by the way, 90 percent of cases in criminal courts, at least here in the District of Columbia, are plea bargain, and when you go to trial, and if you don't plea bargain, the penalties are generally more severe. So many prisoners -- defendants will accept a plea bargain and not even understand the conditions of the word. So there's lots of areas, I mean there's a whole spectrum we can talk about in terms of reforming the criminal justice--reforming the court system. We do see solitary confinement and chemical restraint. When you said you went to Florence, when I was working for the federal bureau, I got to travel throughout the United States visiting all the prisons and jails. The one place I would not go was Florence because of the rate of challenges that existed in that place because it was almost all solitary confinement. Almost all solitary confinement. Which we know through research injures that person, and the longer they are in, the greater that injury to that person's ability. If you said long-term vision, ability to interact, all the things that we say we need prisoners to do, and returning citizens to do upon release, we strip them of them. And Florence serves a purpose because there are some people, and I'll say this, whatever you react, I hope never walk the face of an outside world

again. I'm sorry, there are some people who are just so asocial, and just cannot be anywhere I want to be, at least I'll put it that way, just for their safety and ours, that should be. So there are places that exist for that reason. But I would say 99.5 percent of the people who are in institutions like that, should come home, need to come home but need the resources. And solitary and chemical restraint just isolates that particular behavior for that moment but not for the longer time.

Okay, I think I'm-- Accommodations, particularly in court, I think it's a common practice now to hire an interpreter, but many times it's a language issue and a person with a disability coming from another country, I mean just gets layered on the fact that they not only don't understand the language, ___ if you will, but they don't have interpreters that can give them nuances of what happens to them when they are in court. So again, there are lots of resources there. And the issue of training, many correction officers, and I was on the policy side, I was not on the uniform side, they really do want to do, they want to do their job, go home, have a good day. Many of them, if they have the training, if, the expression goes, when you know better you do better. I've met some really outstanding people who really try to make the extra step but they've not had the training. So we need to give not only the returning citizens but the staff as well the training that they need. Release, on day one, start planning for their release the moment they come into the system, knowing that they will be coming back to the community.

Assessments, or it's called also classification. The best predictor for learning about a person is learning what are their deficits, what do we need to be start putting in place. And different jurisdictions have different capacities. New York City had lots of resources. Most jails in this country are less than 50 people. So when you talk about assessment coming in small facilities they may not have it, but there are people in the community who if you ask them to come in and provide services can. So there's no reason not to do an assessment because you don't have the resources. There are resources available in most communities.

Expand, I'm sorry, extend and expand capacity through NGO—non-governmental support focus on providing reentry solutions for returning citizens. Heading up the National Office of, was building public-private partnerships. There are many people in communities that will come into facilities and provide the service but first we have to reach out and ask them. Nonprofits, philanthropists, many times we don't ask, we just assume that those services are there.

Critical-- collect and use better data. We make assumptions that we know what the nature of the problem is, but I mean, you guys did an amazing job. I thought I knew a lot, but what I learned is that it's a moving ball. And it keeps changing. And we have to continue moving along with it, collecting the data so that we'll be clear when we offer public policy options that we are standing on firm ground.

Engaging employers. That's critical. Everybody has the, say, self worth through work. And one of the things that we can do to earn income tax credits and lots of

different programs, if you will, that are available, but many times we're just not aware, and so recruiting employees but also very importantly giving them the information they need in order to effectively serve--service the disability community. Okay.

Find innovative recidivism. I'm a big proponent of the public health model that says that this punitive system that we have, or these hundred and fifty-three hundred years, however we've had criminal justice model, isn't working. It's not working. So the public health model says let's look at the, I won't get into all of it, but just I will refer you to it, there are other options available to us that are more effective and there's data to support that. They cost less, and they injure the-- all the parties who're involved less as well. Second chances not three strikes. There's second chance legislation that says returning citizens need to have the support. One of them is changing the law and the results, this affects public housing. In some jurisdictions if you are released, you can't go home to your family. And you then join the ranks of the homeless because there are policies in effect that preclude certain charges, certain convictions, people with certain convictions from returning home. You almost set up that person for failure to return. So with that, I will end. And we are taking questions.

AUDIENCE MEMBER:

... and school districts are now requiring disability screening to be done between the ages of, the grades of K through 3. I was wondering if there's any data on this reducing violations of...

JENNIFER: So, the question is "is there data to show that the early screening will actually reduce criminal involvement?" So a lot of that, it takes time for such things to have an impact, and I haven't seen a study that directly does show that. But there are a lot of studies that show failure to complete high school does strongly correlate with entry into the justice system, and one of the largest reasons that people fail to complete school is because they are having this frustration from the lack of disability assessments, accommodations and appropriate support. So, I think that in states that are doing that they will see a significant decrease in crime, and that they will see a significant improvement in output, in terms of capable citizens who are working in jobs and are taxpayers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jennifer you said one of the surprises of the report was that 30.9% of prisoners have cognitive disabilities, would you expand on that? What was counted as a cognitive disability, why do you think the number is so high, and what is some of the impact of that?

JENNIFER: So, I think that first of all, its 30% of those with disabilities have cognitive impairments, not 30% of all prisoners, but 30% of all prisoners who have disabilities reported. One of the problems is that we think that its far larger than that, because that the way that the data is collected is a self-reporting without there

being an independent assessment. And particularly in minority communities there are disincentives from wanting to be labeled, as Janie said, that in a lot of communities if you get the disability label they put you in a slow class, in a segregated class, not an inclusive class that's going to you know, move you forward. So, we think it's far larger than that. It has to be, the ability to remember, could be in there, and some of them might have early Alzheimer's or dementia, some of it might be mental health disorder. But you do see that more than 10% have an intellectual disability, and we just don't know. But I suspect that these environmental issues like lead paint, like fetal alcohol syndrome, in addition to things like autism and down syndrome and other things that are not environmental or that we don't know to be environmentally caused are very, very significant factors for those who are in prison.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is a question for Eddie. What were some of the first steps you took getting back on your feet after release from prison and what would you say is the most instrumental for you for that change?

JENNIFER: Can you use the mic Eddie?

EDDIE: I think for me, my mother was very, very instrumental to my success. My best friend has been my friend since I was ten. You know, I met a lot of probation officers that I've come close to over the years who have been helpful. My now wife has been very helpful to me, and Janie has been very helpful to me in a lot of ways. I think, I gotta give myself credit also, you know, because I know that I wasn't raised that way and I've done a lot of wrong things but, for me, what helped me when I came home was that I knew that I wanted to change, and I knew I had to surround myself around different people to help me get where I need to go, and I did. I achieved my GED when I came home, I started going to college online, but when I had my son I had to stop going to college online, but, I think the positive people around me really, really pushed me to really open up and let go of the shame, the doubt, the things of that nature. And that's what helped me be the person I am today.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Were there any of those people that you kept in contact with from your sentence?

EDDIE: Yes. Yes.

JANIE: Tell them about the judge and the panel.

EDDIE: [laughs]

Well, my judge that sentenced me, we did a panel at a Georgetown death penalty class a few years ago, and he's never sat on a panel with anybody that he's sentenced. And when he came to the school some of the kids were like "what will Eddie do?, how will he react?" and things of that nature. So when the judge came he

read my pre-sentence report and was saying everything that they said. He said, "I am very proud to say that that person was wrong, cause Eddie has proven that person wrong, years ago, even when he was in jail." You know, my judge, I sent him my certificates over the years to show him my success, and when I came home, you know, it was an honor for me to be able to sit down and do a panel just around criminal justice, period. But to have my judge say that he was very proud to see that I've changed my life and giving back to the community, that meant a lot to me. So, yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi, my name is Arthur, from Senator [indiscernible] office. I have a question for Ms. Jeffers. One of the solutions that you put forth was reforming policing practices and some of the use of force policies that police officers might use. How would you recommend approaching that? Would that be like a government standpoint or from a nonprofit standpoint?

JANIE: How to approach, the question is how to approach the issue of reforming policing policy? It has to be collaborative. The silos in which we find comfort in them ourselves and live, mostly aren't that different. So it is a 360 echo system. It is government, it is nonprofit, it is individuals, it is all of us that are stakeholders in seeing this country be what it could be on that area. I truly believe that. The other is that we just need to reach out more. I think one of the things, one of the paper reports from my school, Howard, where my research shows how many creative people are doing wonderful things but they're doing them individually. So until we start collaborating, cooperating, you don't have to be the lead, just be one of the people in there. So to answer your question, it's all: it is states, it is nonprofit, it's elected officials, it is individuals, it is all of us who have a stake in this system and we all do, to make that change. And step out and demand it, absolutely demand it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: To add on to his question about training correctional officers, after I read your draft, I was looking at a report by Human Rights at Home regarding co-responding and co-response teams on how that can help reduce escalation and how you can place a clinician with a police officer when a prisoner has mental health issues. I was wondering if that has been shown to be effective because the research from Human Rights didn't have direct statistics but I was wondering if you had a way to see if it has been effective.

JANIE: Are you talking directly to me?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Just anyone.

JANIE: Okay, one of the things that we know can work, and this really is the role of the police officer, is to de-escalate the situation. When they're called in and that is their purpose and many of them will tell you, they're not there to make it worse, it's to make it better. But I've said before that many of them don't have the training, so at one time I think it was in Multnomah County I can't remember but it was in Oregon, that they would send out a mental, a trained mental health person with every call that came in indicating there was someone in crisis and I do not

remember the data in particular but I remember that it was encouraging, that they had fewer shootings, they had fewer attacks on officers, because that person helped stabilize, de-escalate the situation. And then after that, you can be more effective, so I would be a big proponent of doing that, now can you do it everywhere? No. But you can provide the training at least, so that people are aware that this person is not acting out of malice, they're not in control of their faculties.

AUDIENCE MEMBER (ROBERT RUDNEY): A lot of your focus was on returning citizens, some students in their early twenties, but a lot of the returning citizens the people work with in [inaudible] centers are in their 30s, 40s, 50s, Eddie is an exceptional case and the more power to you, but what sort of solutions are there for your older, middle aged returning citizens who perhaps can't take advantage of a lot of the options that are out there for younger people who are in their teens or twenties.

EDDIE: For me, I came home and I was 31, so I was in the middle of that older-younger. So, I think there needs to be more programs, there's not enough programs, even the younger people for all of them, You got people from 16-18, 18-21 that fall through the cracks just like you have the older ones that fall through the cracks. I think there need to be more programs available for people of different ages because you go to people with high ages you are dealing with more physical disabilities, and as you are getting older you have a lot of things that are wrong with you, that younger people may not have wrong with them. But I think that, you know, from me I have service from 16-60 when they came to dealing with people that are coming home, giving them information, helping them get where they need to go, and things of that nature. There need to be more programs, there's more programs focuses on more young people because they release a second chance act that means for them more money to work with younger people than it is older people, but I think that we need to be more focused on older people also because statistically, there are going to be a lot more older people being released from the bureau of prisons, than it is younger people.

JENNIFER: So if I can add on to what Eddie said, and I totally agree with everything that he has said, in our report we talk a lot about what Janie mentioned, which is capacity-building within the system. There is a huge problem of capacity. So I'll give you an example. So, I live in the state of Maryland, and in the state of Maryland if you are leaving school and you have a disability, there is supposed to be a transition plan to help you get a job. If you acquire a new disability, you can, in theory, go to a One-Stop shop, or a place and ask for support to help get a job. Today the wait list in the state of Maryland is 18 months, 18 months before you get served. And so you have this problem if you're a young person with a disability leaving school you've got these really good, what I call, "get up and go" skills. You know, you get up in the morning and you get dressed, you look fresh, you look job ready, and you're ready to show up some place on time. If you wait 18 months sitting on your parents' couch waiting for your first meeting to go to a vocational rehabilitation officer who is then

going to say to you “I would like to see your resume” and you say “well the last 18 months I’ve sat on my parents’ couch,” that certainly is not going to help you.

So the state of Maryland is rightfully very concerned about criminal justice reform, and like the federal level, is looking to enable people, particularly non-violent offenders who have been involved in these excessive sentences to come home. I just came from, Senator Cornyn was giving a talk over at AEI about his new proposals, along with others, to reduce the sentences. So, in Maryland they’ve reduced the sentences, so you have these people who have the “three strikes you’re out,” and the drug offenders and they’re in for these long sentences. Now 1800 people are going to get out. That doesn’t sound like that many people. 1800 people. But the waiting list of 18 months [at the One-Stop] is actually only 3600 people in the state of Maryland, that’s how slow it is to get services that it takes 18 months to get through those 3600 potential cases. So I know this sounds like a lot of details, but the thing is that best practices are that the second somebody comes out of incarceration it should be hand-in-glove for community services. Hand-in-glove, if you have them go out and they have no access to medication and they have a mental health difference, if they have no access to public housing, and, as Janie pointed out, and their parent lives in public housing that says “people with a conviction for X can’t live there” so now they can’t live with their parents or their sister or their brother because they are literally forbidden from living in that place, they’re homeless now. And they have no access to someone to help them find a job, now what are you going to do? Where are you going to put them in line? Already the line was 18 months long, now, are you going to say “well, it’s so important for the person coming out of prison to get services that they now go to the front of the line?” So the person who has the disability who just finished high school or just finished whatever schooling they’re gonna do, but didn’t commit a crime is now put to the back of the line? How are you gonna handle that?

In Maryland today my county, Montgomery County, 25% of the jobs for being a case manager are actually open. Why? Because to be a job coach in this situation you need a college degree, you need certain experience, and essentially it’s like a licensing situation to be able to coach these people, and they’re paying \$12 an hour. So who, with all of those credentials, wants to take a job that pays \$12 an hour? So that means that there are people that could be, I mean in theory you could handle this more technical job slots, but people who have the legal qualifications are not going to take that job, so that makes the waiting list even longer and the case load even larger for the other people. So a good deal of our report does talk about the need for these non-profit organizations, as Janie mentioned, to really play a role, for faith-based organizations, there are a number of organizations; Philip Pauli and our team put in a number of different non-profits that are doing very good work, but those non-profits tend not to be putting the disability lens into the work that they are doing. So what they are saying is “we need to up someones literacy,” but they’re not recognizing well that individual has executive function disorder or dyslexia. There are ways to help people with those issues learn how to read successfully, let’s use that way and not a way that isn’t going to work.

So there are a number of things that you'll see in the report, there's a huge number of links. I really encourage you to go online and read the report, it's much better to read it online than a hard copy, and it was emailed out, hopefully all of you got it, it's on your computers when you go back, because there are so many links in this document that are linking to successful programs or promising practices, a lot of work went into finding those programs and linking to them so that you can investigate other resources. And I just want to say that this is a great team, and I was really honored to work on this, with Philip, with Janie, with Eddie, to have Evelyn moderate this. We have a team of fellows at RespectAbility that is extraordinary; we are a new non-profit organization, we are almost 3 years old and we have only 5 people on staff, we have so many people that are volunteers. If anyone here is interesting in being engaged in these issues we are looking for volunteers, we are looking for partners, if you think after reading the report that there is something that you know that we are missing, please email us and let us know because we are just learning as much as we can as quickly as possible so that we can get the word out. A lot of you, even the ones that are incredibly young, are in incredibly important jobs and roles. And if you're an intern and you can take this information back to the legislative assistant that is working on these issues you could make a really profound difference, and so I want to congratulate those of you who took the time to spend 90 minutes to learn more about these issues. I mean, we just came from a meeting with Senator Cornyn, who, you know, he's been working on justice issues for decades and yet he said he really doesn't know much about disability and the criminal justice system and he's interested, very interested in learning more, and I think that's probably true about all of your members and senators. So thank you all very much.

[Applause]