



## **The State of Rhode Island, Walgreens and the USBLN to Host the New England Workplace Inclusion and Equality Summit: People with Disabilities Reaching Competitive Employment**

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PROVIDENCE, R.I., (June 24, 2014) – The state of Rhode Island, Walgreens and the US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®), will host the **“New England Workplace Inclusion and Equality Summit: People with Disabilities Reaching Competitive Employment,”** to help streamline the recruitment and hiring of employees with disabilities, from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Friday, June 27, at Rhode Island College, 600 Mount Pleasant Ave., Providence.

“There are 56.7 million Americans with a disability or one in five individuals, according to the 2010 US Census. The majority of these individuals are of working age,” said **Jill Houghton**, USBLN executive director. “The Summit is a public/private partnership with the ultimate goal of streamlining the process and making it easier for employers to recruit and hire talented candidates with disabilities since business will drive the change toward more inclusive workplaces.”

National and local business leaders, federal contractors, individuals with disabilities and their guests, government delegates, provider representatives, and community partners from across nine states – Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont – will come together to share best practices, identify barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities, propose meaningful recommendations for overcoming such barriers, and make real commitments to employing individuals with disabilities. This is also an opportunity for federal contractors to create linkage agreements with schools, service provider agencies, and government officials.

Throughout the next 10 years, Rhode Island will facilitate the transition of at least 2,000 individuals with disabilities, currently served in segregated programs like sheltered workshops, into typical jobs in the community, and will ensure that students with significant disabilities leaving high school receive the transition services necessary to secure competitive employment. USBLN member companies like Walgreens have realized the many benefits of hiring hundreds of talented people with disabilities and will share their successful experiences.

“We are extremely proud of the work we do to support people with disabilities in the diverse communities we serve,” said **Steve Pemberton**, chief diversity officer at Walgreens. “Our efforts continue to open doors and help business owners understand the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to their workforce. Our work with this summit is an extension of that commitment. This Friday, different stakeholders from the business world to government officials and community partners will be sharing best practices and key takeaways. We look forward to making connections with potential partners during the summit.”

This is an invitation only event; those interested in attending please contact Leslie Wilson at [leslie@wilres.com](mailto:leslie@wilres.com). There is a \$50.00 fee and registration closes today, Tuesday, June 24 at 5:00 pm EDT. Press is invited to the Opening Plenary scheduled from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Members of the media may arrive as early as 8:30 a.m.

**About the US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®)**

The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) is a national non-profit that helps business drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. The USBLN serves as the collective voice of nearly 50 Business Leadership Network affiliates across the United States, representing over 5,000 businesses. Additionally, the USBLN® Disability Supplier Diversity Program® (DSDP) is the nation’s leading third party certification program for disability-owned businesses, including businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. [www.usbln.org](http://www.usbln.org)

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