SECRETARY OF LABOR
WASHINGTON

JUL 3 0 2019

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Governor Abbott:

This July marks the 29th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the landmark civil rights legislation that paved the way for millions of Americans with disabilities to more fully participate in all aspects of society, including employment. The ADA underpins much of our work at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), particularly for our Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

I want to encourage Texas to adopt a practice currently employed by several states to track data related to state government employees with disabilities. DOL applauds this commendable practice. At the federal level, this information is critical to assess our policies and programs in effecting real progress by increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Although not a requirement for states, tracking voluntarily disclosed disability employment data allows states to better assess their hiring practices and compare their results with other states. Tracking the hires and advancements of state employees with disabilities allows states, like the private sector, to ensure their workforce reflects the communities and constituencies they serve. In addition, collecting demographic information that includes disability status helps states understand how to provide state employees with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

To learn more about tracking disability employment data, I encourage you to contact the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED). Funded by ODEP, SEED is a unique state-federal collaboration and a powerful partner with states in breaking down employment barriers for Americans with disabilities. In collaboration with state intermediary partners, SEED provides direct policy assistance, resources, and subject matter expertise, helping states advance the employment of people with disabilities through effective policymaking. More information is available at https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/State-Policy.htm.

In addition to exploring these resources, I encourage you to look ahead to *next* July, to the exciting 30th anniversary of the ADA. The timing of this milestone affords you ample opportunity to take action in Texas and pursue targeted initiatives around disability employment. Examples include recognizing October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month; launching disability inclusion initiatives; implementing effective, inclusive workforce policies; and evaluating successes in your state and sharing data—all with a view toward having tangible results to report in honor of ADA30.

Thank you for your efforts to ensure that everyone can work and succeed—for the benefit of themselves, their families, their communities, and our nation's economy. I wish you continued success and hope to collaborate with you on future efforts to break down employment barriers for unemployed and underemployed Americans.

Sincerely,

PATRICK PIZZELLA
Acting Secretary of Labor