

House Republican Press Release

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**A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE State Representative Ruth Fahrbach**



**New initiative aimed at increased employment opportunities for those with disabilities**

The Connecticut Department of Social Services is in the process of ramping-up its *Connect-Ability* initiative, a program aimed at bringing together businesses with able job seekers with disabilities.

According to the [www.Connect-Ability.com](http://www.Connect-Ability.com) Web site, Connect-Ability began in late 2005 with a federal grant to the State of Connecticut to identify and remove barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities. The five-year, multi-million dollar federal grant involved a detailed look at Connecticut's employment and disability services infrastructure in order to identify problem areas and implement lasting solutions.

Connect-Ability has two primary customers: Employers of various sizes in many different industries that are seeking qualified workers; and people with disabilities of all ages who are seeking employment for the first time or who want a new challenge

The program does not directly provide services to match individuals with specific jobs. Instead, the efforts of DSS are targeted at removing the barriers which keep our primary customers from finding one another. These barriers include low expectations, the transition from school to work, inadequate transportation, and the actual process of recruitment, hiring, and retention.

Over the past few years, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have issued grants to states to create new ways for people with disabilities to be included in their local communities. Target areas have included transition out of institutions, support systems, housing, social inclusion, and work. The Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) is focused on removing barriers to employment. Connecticut's first MIG created a buy-in program under Medicaid so that people no longer had to choose between working and having the health insurance and support services they need. Connect-Ability is Connecticut's second Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

**Employers** - Connect-Ability works with large corporations, medium-sized businesses, and small employers in all sectors, including government service.

**People with disabilities of all ages** - Connect-Ability's target population is people that may have physical, sensory, emotional, and/or intellectual disabilities, and may be high school students, people in their 30's or 40's, or people of retirement age.

Whether you are an employer seeking workers, or a prospective employee, you can visit [www.Connect-Ability.com](http://www.Connect-Ability.com), or call 1-866-844-1903 for more information.

*Rep Ruth Fahrback represents the 61<sup>st</sup> District, including Suffield, and parts of Windsor and East Granby, in the General Assembly.*