*Please personalize all of the highlighted areas, but* ***don't forget to remove the highlight before sending to your legislator****.*

Name

Address

Email—Phone Number

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Representative/Senator Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Representative/Senator:

My name is   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [please personalize this paragraph with information about you, to include that you live in the legislator’s district, if you have met this legislator, and whether you are a person with a disability, teacher, advocate, etc.].I am writing to let you know about employment barriers facing individuals with disabilities in South Carolina and the importance of **Employment First**. Employment First means that employment in the community at competitive wages is the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities.

South Carolinians with disabilities are incredibly underrepresented in employment. **In South Carolina, 66.6% of working-age, non-institutionalized people with disabilities are not employed.** While South Carolina’s economy continues to grow with a low unemployment rate of just 3.6% in July 2018, the only way to meet businesses’ labor needs is if employers tap into the skills and innovation of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities should be valued members of South Carolina’s workforce and deserve employment opportunities and wage protections like any other worker. I would be happy to talk more by phone/e-mail/mail/in-person and tell you my story. HireMeSC.org also has great resources to understand this issue better. I’ve enclosed an information sheet to give you a snapshot of disability employment in our state.

Sincerely,

[Signature]



Your Name



Inclusive Employment Today. Unlimited Promise Tomorrow.

Hire Me SC, an Employment First Initiative.

The South Carolina Employment First Initiative is a statewide effort to increase competitive and integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities receiving assistance from publicly funded services.

Competitive & Integrated Employment is:

* Working at least 20 hours a week
* Making minimum wage or more
* Equivalent pay to individuals without disabilities
* Working alongside individuals without disabilities
* Working within the local community



individuals in South Carolina have a disability

\*Source: 2016 American Community Survey 1-year estimates









individuals with disabilities in South Carolina work in setting where they may earn less than $1 per hour.

Source: United States Department of Labor, Community Rehabilitations List

the employment gap for individuals with disabilities in SC compared to those without disabilities.

Source: 2017 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

South Carolina’s unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is one of the HIGHEST in the country.

Source: 2017 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium

individuals with disabilities are unemployed.

Source: 2017 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium



Employers consistently rate workers with disabilities as average or above average in performance, quality of work, flexibility to demands, attendance, and safety. Source: Virginia Commonwealth University

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