

*Thank you, Chairman Casey and our witnesses here today.*

It's great to see a record number of Americans with disabilities being employed.

I hope we can continue these gains despite economic turbulence, with inflation still up over 3 percent and the highest interest rates in decades.

My home state prioritizes the ability of Hoosiers with disabilities to earn a living and support themselves and their families. Indiana is a proud "Employment First" state.

This means understanding how hardworking, motivated, and entrepreneurial these individuals are.

We'll learn more about this today from Jeff Mittman, the CEO of Bosma, a great Hoosier who goes above and beyond in his work.

Indiana is blessed to have many businesses and organizations empowering people with disabilities.

In Knox County, KCARC invests in commercial sewing and other manufacturing equipment to accommodate workers with disabilities.

KCARC talks about its workforce as a commitment to freedom for people with disabilities to work when and how they want.

We should keep that freedom in mind as we consider the best strategies to help with employment and be careful to avoid limiting choices.

Opportunity Enterprises in Indiana connects Hoosiers with disabilities to good jobs and helps other businesses learn to do the same.

It appreciates flexibility in policy.

It is clear that one size does not fit all when it comes to disability employment and policy.

That's why a growing number of individuals with disabilities are turning to starting their own small businesses to improve their economic security.

As a former small business owner, I am always happy to promote initiatives that encourage others to seek entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship can be rewarding for employers, employees, and the communities in which their businesses serve.

People with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed than those without disabilities.

There are currently more than 1.8 million business owners with disabilities in the United States.

We must continue to support entrepreneurs with disabilities so they can start and expand their own businesses.

Senator Shaheen and I introduced the *Supporting Disabled Entrepreneurs Act*, which directs the Small Business Administration (SBA) to designate a Coordinator for Disabled Small Business Concerns and collect voluntary data on the disability status of small business owners.

This is an important first step in removing some of the barriers for disabled small business owners and ensuring they have access to SBA programs.

I thank the Chairman for his support of this legislation.

I look forward to hearing more about the current issues surrounding employment for individuals with disabilities.

*Thank you Chairman – yield back.*