

**DISCLAIMER: This text is being provided in a rough-draft format. It is not a verbatim transcript. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.**

## **INSILC**

Indiana Independent Living Council

“INSILC Disability Town Hall”

Tuesday, 9/23/2025

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

[INSILC Disability Town Hall]

>> Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for coming. We will start with the formal part of our event in about 10 minutes or so. We have some folks that are still checking at the front desk. So please, use the next 10 minutes to visit some of our exhibitors and find a comfortable spot. And I will see you in 10 minutes.

>> Thanks for coming out, guys. How are you? What's happening, everybody? What did you guys got? Chocolates. Smart. Smart. Showing off a little bit, but smart. Have they passed any chocolates to you? You said no? That's smart. I am doing good. Same old stuff. What are you showing off here? Okay. Yup. Okay. All right. Excellent, I did not know you guys did that. That's good. Okay. That's excellent. All right. I might have to throw that into something I say tonight. Go see Rodney. Wow, thank you for coming out. All right. Okay okay. Come on in! Not at all. Well, you got your workout in. You don't need to now, you are all set. Well, we appreciate you coming. There you go. We had a four hour deal earlier. Today, so, yeah my brain is still functioning. But only barely. No, this has been great so far. Okay. I'll look. Let's take a look, shall we? I'm going to read them all. What's up? Oh my gosh. I guess so. Look, this is my friend and helper, Julia. She is an OT student. Down from the fourth of the -- and basically telling everybody what to do tonight. You are off now? All right, good. Hey, no, this is I just invited people. I'm glad that we did it. I think were all going to be pleasantly wonderful when it's all over. And feel good about it. Gotta make sure they follow through now. Okay. I think I am okay for now. We have a pretty good crowd for the Town Hall, too. Luke, would you have that helped you out while you are here? Oh, good for him. Okay. That's cool. I wouldn't take her anywhere. Really? Good for you. Oh, really? That's amazing, that's a good that's a great sized group. Yup. Makes sense. Yeah. Yeah, gotta have backups. Cool. Every day we figure it out, right? Okay, I am looking one more time. Now I'm just nervous reading. I'm going to ask the mayor about housing, accessible housing. Transportation. Employments, easy. Okay. Okay. Okay, I think I'm good. We got this! We got this! Probably. You can set up front. Those come up every now and then. If you want to. Thanks for being here! I know, right? Well, Ted's here. We added Ted Brown. Alex had about 10 minutes. Ted is here. Do you feel okay with the topics? That's right! We are very much well, this is like to warm up conversation with everyone here. And there's a number of individuals here that have been here for four hours today, so. Hey, guy! Alex is running a little bit late, coming back from Indy. Exactly. Somebody's got to be made fun of here. Well, it probably will be, at some point. Yeah, let's do it. Yes, we are.

Here we go!

>> Are you starting with questions?

>> Yeah.

>> Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for your patience as we work through our logistics. We are getting ready to begin our Town Hall. So, I would invite everybody to find their seat, and we will begin.

Thank you all, my name is Mike and I am the executive director of the Indiana state Independent Living Council. Happy to welcome you guys to our Evansville Disability Town Hall. So, thank you all for coming. And thank you weather for not being like yesterday, yet, so hopefully that turns out to help us when we leave here as well. But, I wanted to tell you a little bit about who we are. You will often hear us being called a INSILC, and we are a part of the independent living network here in Indiana. We are part of the network with Indiana's Centers for independent living and with our partners at the state of Indiana, and collectively, we are working to do this event, to make an effort to help make sure people with disabilities can live their lives independently. And our role in network is to help work on statewide issues and to bring everybody together to talk about issues that are impacting the entire state. And we have a strategic plan that helps us to think about that, and help us figure out the best way is to do that and in the strategic plan, it talks about one of our goals being to do these town halls in areas of the state that are unserved and underserved. And so, that is why we are here today, it is to talk to folks in Evansville. And this is our part of our series. We have so far for this year been in Lafayette. And in South Bend, we will do a virtual one in December that's open to anyone in the state, and then will go around other parts of Indiana in 2026. So, really excited to be here and kind of talk to you guys about that. And our town halls really have two purposes. One, to give you guys a chance to hear from local policymakers, and have a chance to ask them questions. And then two, to have you guys have a chance to learn about the resources that are available in a community, and an opportunity to tell us about the needs in community as well. So, those are the process that we are here, that we are here for today. And I do want to let you know that we have ASL interpreting, right next to me and we do have CART services as well. And we do have a slide with a QR code where you can watch the StreamText. And I want to thank our sponsor, AARP. They help pay for this event, so we really appreciate their support. Thank you. I would like to thank our panelist, Mayor, Stephanie Terry. State representative Alex Burton. And a former Toyota executive, Ted Brown. And then our MC for the day is going to be Evansville city County president Ben Trockman. And I would also like to thank the Evansville chief of police is here with us today, so thank you for coming out. We appreciate your efforts. And I would like to also thank our INSILC, chair, Casey Wildee, is with us today. She is the heart and soul of our council. We wouldn't be here without her. So thanks, Casey. And with that I would like to turn it over to our MC, that is city County president, Ben Trockman. So, Ben, a few things about Ben. So, then has been

involved in the disability community and particularly doing advocacy work for about the last 20 years.

Ben started doing outreach for Old national bank. And then Ben was also named for the 20 under 40 for the city of Evansville for the all the great work that he does and when we started to think about this event, we were kind of doing this in conjunction with our friends at the leak, and we said, we want to put on a event in Evansville. In the first thing they said was oh, you guys need to talk to Ben Trockman. I mean, if we are always happy to have a connection, and have a city Council counselor at the time. That's great. And so, we had a chance to meet with Ben. And then is one of the folks who has a connector. And he said it would be nice to get the mayor at the Town Hall. And we said oh, that would be great. And like 50 people at our Town Hall. Done. So, and let me get you that within three days. So, we really thank you. He has been a good friend and really great person to work with, and I think you represent the disability community in here at Evansville really really well. And I'm very excited that he agreed to moderate this panel. So, with that, I am going to turn it over to Ben Trockman.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Well, thank you very much, Mike. Obviously, the cash you gave me earlier works. And I thank you, everyone, for being here tonight. I see that a lot of you that spend some time with us earlier today. For those of you that were not here this morning will come from 10 AM to 4 PM. We had a bit of a working session with a group of about 75 different people. Coming up with solutions, ideas, regarding transportation accessibility with an employment, within community engagement, and healthcare. So today, we had a really productive day of conversations and collaboration. And now we get to hear from some really smart really well respected people this evening. Yes, definitely not Ted. But, appreciate everyone being here. You all know Mayor Terry who, if I may say so myself, has done a phenomenal job in the first two years of her term. Dear friend and drinking partner, Ted Brown. I know, yeah that's part of the circle. And we will fun of Alex for being late when he comes in. But to get down to it and just know this as a kind of get into some of this conversation, we want this to be interactive. This is not us speaking at you. This is speaking with you. What we know is that today's event and this evening is kind of first of its kind in our community, at least, for a long time. And so, it's kind of testing off the advocacy angle for people with disabilities. In trying to figure out ways that we as the city, we as leaders and community members can work together, I think is the ultimate goal of this evening.

With that said, we have a couple questions that we will start off with to get the discussion going. And we will get a microphone. I could have been ready for that one. But, Mayor, we might start with you in terms of I know one big focus and topic on your agenda and has been is housing. What are some ways or some already things in

process what the city can do to promote more accessible and more affordable housing for individuals with disabilities?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Thank you, Ben. And I appreciate to be here with you all this afternoon. And to talk about the issues that are important to you. So that you can have the best quality of life, in the city of Evansville. And in terms of housing, we know that in this city, based on our annual housing study, that we need 4000 + housing units. And that's at all income levels. But, this administration has put a lot of priority and affordability and having affordable housing available. And so, some of the things that we can do to help developers, encourage developers to come to our community and, you know, build out the necessary housing units that we need. One is incentives. So as a city, we can, you know, pay a little taxes so we can freeze property taxes for certain time periods. We can gift to land developers, but we can also make financial contributions. And we do that through the affordable housing trust fund. Last year, we budgeted \$1 million, which was an increase from the prior year, and this year, we have proposed another million dollars so we can help, again, provide financial support to afford affordable housing developments in our city. We have a couple actually on the horizon. I'm really excited to be able to announce those and break ground. Very soon, and one on the east side. And then another one in Jacob's built neighborhood behind Bossi field and Crawford door. And so, the things that are in the pipeline, but those are the ways that we can support housing development. I think the other thing that is to look at a zoning change is and how we can make it easier for the development to take place. In the finally, as administrator is, anything that we back as a city, and we also can make developers prioritize, accessibility and affordability in every and so, trying to make we have conversations and developers that are interested in coming to our community. And, you know, we are talking about those issues from the very start of the conversation.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: That's great, Mayor, I know that some of the conversations I've had with your director at the Metropolitan development, you know, accessibility and going above even just ADA standards and current projects is the top of and so, I love hearing that. Go ahead?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: And I think one other piece I failed to mention, with the affordable housing trust fund is that we are not only using that to incentivize new project development, but we are also doing some home repairs with programs, and that's what a lot of you can benefit with that program, whether it's a wheelchair ramp, or you name it, we are trying to do improvements so that individuals can stay in their homes.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: I know that I did a review for this question, but I note that I will just in recent conversation, you know, housing is critical. I know you have an example of how important it is that you would mind just sharing as independent living situation.

>> Thank you, Ben. I appreciate the opportunity to share. As I have indicated I have a son with disability. He's just turned 28 years old. So, pretty proud of him and he was born with -- so the spinal cord was out of his back. He has some learning disability is, social disabilities, emotional disabilities. But, you know, living on his own has been a big help to his mental health, honestly. It makes him feel independent. He's able to drive to work, he has a job at the Toyota campus on supplier there. And one of the things that was a big attribute to him being able to move into that was the program up in a Muncie, Indiana called -- green training Institute, where he was a 12 week apprenticeship program and he was living at a hotel. And I will openly admit, as an overprotective parent, when he moved to Muncie, Indiana, that's a long way from here. You know, that was first time he had ever spent away from my wife and I in the 19 years of his life. So, having opportunities like that was really cool for him to gain that independent living skill, not only for him, but also for my wife and I feel strong that he could live on his own. So, he lives on his own in an apartment complex.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Thank you for sharing the context. And again, I know it hits home in the Independence. I don't know if Zach wants to be a little further away from you.

>> We are little too accessible, and he tells us all.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Well, that is the next step. Well, Ted, what you have the microphone. Your involvement with the Toyota and, you know, the way that we met maybe 10 years ago with some of the great work you guys were doing, very forward for thinking, being inclusive of people with disabilities in your workforce. Maybe talk a little bit about what you all did and some other really good practices about inclusive hiring that you have seen?

>> TED BROWN: Yeah, thanks. You know, it was an honor and privilege to serve at Toyota. I was there for almost 26 years. I just recently retired, and really proud to have been a part of that culture. You know, during that timeframe, we created some incredible partnerships with local service providers, and the only one that really sticks out as partnership with the AHRQ Southwest Indiana. And up there, in Princeton, and the organization that allowed them to access to our jobs. So, there job coaches actually came on our site, and actually performed the jobs on the shop floor. So, the were in the welding shop, and the consumers, they could then match the desires of the consumers and their skills to open jobs that we had. And what can I say is we started this program in 2014, and, you know, when I left we had roughly about 100 team members with

disabilities working on our campus. When I talk about campus, it's about 1500 acres, 10,000 jobs, about 20 some plus employers in a 2 mile radius of where we are. You know, the best program that I will share was one that we created through this partnership with the Ark Southwest Indiana that we call the Inclusive Talent Apprenticeship Program. And honestly, we mirrored that was being done at -- green training Institute up there in Muncie. We created a 12 week apprenticeship program that does have housing component as well. Individuals can live in a hotel for 12 weeks during that apprenticeship program. And it really replace the entire assessment and testing process for onboarding for individuals, which we found was the biggest obstacle for those with disabilities in getting jobs at Toyota. We wanted to have something that would replace that to allow them to bring their best self into that process. It required a strong partnership, not just with AHR Q Southwest Indiana, but also regional and state organizations like the family social service administration, vocational rehab, and others that make sure that we are all being understanding of each other's needs so that all organizations were successful in our support for that population of people that were trying to represent. You know, some of the highlights of the program, many of employers on our campus took advantage of this apprenticeship. And we were able to place the pull all through several different employers there. The other thing that I will talk about is creating a mentoring program for our apprentices that were found it very successful. Apprentices came in, they were given a team member that was apprenticed to them. That program was so successful that we launch that across all new hires, not just individuals with disability's. But, everybody. But we saw a huge increase in our morale and our family culture, and success and retention of our new hires as well. Some of the key components to success through our program, one executive leadership. That wasn't me back in 2014, I never imagined I would like the title of executive that's kind of weird. Because you were Canadian, red? Yes because I'm Canadian. But, you know, I was on the shop floor, our president and our leader, senior executive leaders in our plant were very strong proponents of the inclusive culture that allowed everybody to be successful. So, they were supportive of seeing a spring individuals with disability's on the shop floor, so that was really important. I think those are the key component is having operational floor champion, right? When we are in operation, you are onto the floor. You are on the trenches, these are going to happen. Obstacles are going to count up. So, how you have the floor champion's out there are willing to work through these obstacles, along with the partners on the job coaches from the service provider. And that was my role back in 2014. And now, we've got probably hundreds of floor champion, and on the shop floor. I would say, our HR legal team was strongly engaged. We really needed them to understand, you know, that was going to replace the assessment process without, you know, nullifying it. And that was the 12 week. Apprenticeship program. While we were assessing those individuals alongside with the job coaches to make sure that they had all of the qualifications that were

required. It didn't change any of the qualifications. We help strengthen modified job for everybody to be more successful. It was, you know, it was a win-win situation. And so, the last, I can't speak highly enough about you know the ARC Southwest Indiana and their commitment to making sure that they were finding the right candidates for us. They didn't come to us with a list of names saying hey, pick one. They did an assessment, the training and then made that individuals come to us already had disposition for working in a manufacturing environment. It's not for everybody, I understand, but they are making sure that those individuals will be suited for that. You know, I think the results to me, they were really created a more inclusive team culture, more of a family culture, and one that I'm really proud of that have been part of so it's been pretty cool.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Ted, you highlight many great examples of what happens when you lead with the hard. And when you focus on inclusion, I mean, just the number of families that are affected, can you know, the number of individuals that you can afford to get that household or that apartment or car. Because Toyota had Toyota Ted had inclusive mindset and, you know, it's a little examples like that, that drive quite frankly our local economy. You know, I know that one of the barriers that we talk about often and I know that this was an issue at Toyota as well. And I might pivot back to the mayor. And welcome, representative. I'm glad that you could join us.

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Say representative, Alex Burton.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: State representative, Alex Burton, ladies and general. And just speaking of transportation, I think this question was written before the news was came out this week. So, maybe a little bit of a softball bed. You know, what we have seen, all of us have, it's easy to read the news that, you know, we are as a city and as a state operating on a little tighter margins right now. Left, right, up and down. But, what can a city do and what are some of the things that the city is doing regarding transportation to better connect individuals with the great employment, like at Toyota? Maybe you can share a few examples?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Sure, the experts though, are in the room as well. Todd Robinson who is the executive director of transportation and other services, and then Jonathan S who is with the -- director and so they do have more information. If I can't answer completely. But, what of the things that the councilmember mention is that the other day, I guess it was Friday, last week, we announce the expansion of Mets micro. It has been servicing background and east side, at least until 2023, at the end of 2023 is when we launched that program. It really it's a door-to-door service for medical appointments, going to work. It's a great way, again, to have more, you know, access for those with disabilities to use that particular service. We have already seen just in the short, what can a year and half or so, that have been running the program, an increase



in ridership, and so, this year alone we have had over 36,000 rights. And again, an increase from last year when I think it was close to 22,000. So, it's definitely a needed service. It's been utilized and we want to do our best to contribute to expand that. And we have included a current footprint in our budget for 2026. And we are hopeful that we will continue to pursue other, you know, state and federal resources to expand that, because we would love to offer that citywide at some point. And I think the other thing, we are looking at as it relates to transportation is a regional transit authority. So, working with Evansville MPO Metropolitan planning organization, as well as -- building, you know, building out regional transit systems. And we believe that will offer, again, more opportunities for individuals in this region, as it relates to transportation. And finally, also, you know, and looking at how we can make more investments in ADA compliant sidewalks and curbs. Ramps and so forth. And so, city engineer is here, Mike who can answer any questions about that. We are trying to be really intentional and I think again, how we can make the city a place for everyone.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: And, you know, regardless of their challenges I can tell you that again, those that were not here earlier today. Those four hours. Of about 20 people in each room, just talk about important things on their minds in terms of accessibility and inclusion and in our community and sidewalks, transportation, was talked about over and over. So, great news on Mets micro expanding. And I think in terms of regional transit authority engaging with other communities to provide more options makes a lot of sense. So, just exciting times to know that is, at least being explored. Representative Burton now that you are on the hot seat. You know, I know that we can talk a lot about of good things that are happening. There's some tough work going on right now. I think challenges that individuals with disabilities and just our everyday folks are handling right now in terms of different costs. You know, what is the state doing in terms of, you know, and of trying to figure out ways I want to say this right, I don't get the questions right in front of me. I forget sometimes. But, there is a relationship between financial security and success for people with disabilities to engage. Thank you. And the community, you know, that is what we are talking about. As engagement, whether it's employment or, you know, just whether it's going down the sidewalks. I mean, can you talk a little bit about, you know, what from the state level, maybe some work that you are doing from a financial security standpoint you can do to help individuals of all abilities?

>> ALEX BURTON: Certainly. What comes to mind immediately his wages. You know, wages are, you know, minimum wage has not moved at all. And someone working full-time making minimum wage, can't make it in our community. And then when it comes to the expenses that incur, whether we are talking the utility bills or healthcare, there are so many challenges that exist. And frankly, I don't think there's enough attention paid at the Statehouse in this current moment to all the issues that are bubbling, specifically as it relates to utility bills and uncertainty, and especially with

those on fixed incomes trying to make ends meet. It makes it incredibly difficult. But, going back to the cost with healthcare, that right there is probably the next thing that is going to bubble up and be on the brink of bursting. I note that there has been a lot of attention on energy costs right now. But, healthcare right now, the way that our state is approaching it is problematic in a lot of different ways. Going to my first legislative session, there was already 1 billion with a B dollar shortfall. And you pair that between December and April, there was \$800 million deficit due to all the terrorists that were supposed to be enacted, right? So, we have gone from a state that had healthy reserves to now, all of a sudden, being in jeopardy. So, and when it comes to healthcare cost is typically, the only way for those cost to be addressed is to put it back onto those who already are paying healthcare insurance. And, you know, I'm sure between now and when legislative session starts, more will start coming about that and hospitals become even more louder about what's the reality as it relates to our medical healthcare system but to the state. I hate to be so doom and gloom, but there are so many issues addressing or facing our state right now. And it seems that we are not focused on anything that really matters.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Thank you. I think it's doom and gloom and stuff and scenarios right now but it's just a reality that we face and that's important to have good leaders like you in place that are speaking about, you know, some of the very important issues.

I am going to change the conversation. We are talking about healthcare. And healthcare comes in many forms. And I think that's something that again, another thing that was discussed earlier today was access to information. You know, whether it's being able to connect with the department heads in the city or whether it's, you know, understanding who is the right person to reach out to. Where resources are. Mayor, I am going to turn it back over to you. In terms of individuals with disabilities being able to access information just in general. That's something again in the three different groups that we heard today, just having one spot, one-stop shop for information. But, that was critically important. What are the steps that the city are making to make information more accessible for people with disabilities?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Yeah. Well, I think number one I think the greatest tool we have is our city website. Which probably most not go to, right? In this room. Do you go to it frequently? Do you navigate to it easily? No? It's tough. But, all right. You are right. And so, that is one thing we are looking at is being able to make update that website. So, it's more user-friendly. You don't have to click five times to get to what you are going to. And in our proposed budget, so hopefully the Council will support that. But, I think that is one primary tool for us to look at. In addition to that, there's even a city app. We all know that we are using smart phones as a tool, but then also making available,

again, additional tools aside from just face-to-face meetings like this. And as we know, for most of our traveling city halls or other, you know, meetings we have, like parka chats and things like that are specific, we don't see good attendance. And so, while we still offer them, we want to be sure that technology wise that we are making the needed improvements. Again, so that it's more accessible for folks to get information.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: That is really great news, honestly, it's good to know. I'm just kind of blunt. The website sucks right now. It is not been updated in a while. So, as a user, I'm someone who is like, who do I reach out to? Which department? That would be helpful for me as city councilman.

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: And I know we have 211 but many cities have 311 as city services. And that is something we have explored a little bit. I mean, we will continue to dive into that a little bit more. But, in the meantime, again, our initial steps is to update our website and look at the city app.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Thank you very much. So, thinking about emergency situations. And Mayor, this is one that maybe the chief pipes in on too. But, we think about and this, again a conversation that was had today during our session is what are we doing to ensure that people with disabilities are being accounted for when it comes to preparedness to emergencies? You know, whether it's encounters with the police, whether it's encounters with the fire department. You know, we had Syed MPL this morning talking about getting more employee of his out of the building safely. Maybe you can talk a little bit about, you know, what kind of plans or any current engagement or future engagement might be? I'm opening it up there.

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Me too, looking at James if he has some thought. No, I mean, just before them's meeting, I met with Casey and she told me about a program called, what is it called? Tell me? Rethinking Autism. Yeah. And so, that is one thing that we can look at, for sure. Help with training and identify like identifying, so that individuals can be identified when encountering public safety officials. You have any thoughts?

>> BEN TROCKMAN: This was a little bit of a set up.

>> ALEX BURTON: I see that. [LAUGHTER].

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Welcome, our fourth panelist.

>> I was back tinkering with my phone and am tinkering with an email from a program called the Blue Envelope Program. What's that? You are the one that sent me that? Oh, yeah, he sent this to myself and Sheriff Noah Robertson. So, pleasure to meet

you. [LAUGHTER]. And it's been a pleasure reading about this. So, I'm going to pass the mic for him to tell me. There you go. The opportunity to tell us.

>> Thanks, chief. I also have server onto the board. I had the privilege of serving on the board of Special Olympics for the state of Indiana, and at was at a recent discussion with some of our athletes. It's really cool. Jeff Mueller's our CEO, he's in the back of the room. And I'm really proud of how we are engaging our athletes that we are representing to give us feedback. One of the things that they shared with us, there is an athlete that lives in Marion County, there is a blue envelope program that individuals with disabilities can put their registration, insurance, and a little bit about their disability, emergency contact information and that blue envelope. And then the police force are then instructed and Todd, I'm learning about how this happens. I'm reaching out to the Marianne County executor's office to understand how that training goes for your folks there. She police, chief Smith. So then when police arrived and they get that blue envelope, they know that this individual maybe has some different ability, or may react differently. Think about, you know, I think about Toyota. When we bring individuals in there, it's an overwhelming stimulus wise, there's sparks flying, there's lights flashing, there's bells and whistles and all of these things, and you think about getting pulled over by the police officer, same thing. An individual with a disability may be reacting kind of out of ending and a state of anxiety, as opposed to a state of calmness, which then could escalate something with the police. Which they don't want to have happen. And this way, they can approach it more calmly, both entities would feel more secure about that exchange. So, I was in some information to ban and achieve Smith here, and we are going to have some discussion about that and learn more, because it's already active in Marion County. It's actually active across the state of Massachusetts.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: So, that was easy. Well, you know, well I think it's really easy, and I said this to the group earlier today. Since I was elected in 2019, in the back of my mind, I thought about how can I use, and I tell people this if I get into a good conversation that, you know, part of running for office originally for me was for a lot of different reasons. Alex wouldn't leave me alone. But, one of the reasons Iran is to provide a little bit of hope for others. And to set the groundwork so that other people in the future that might have a similar disability or, you know, might be able to see themselves and be a little bit ad. I share that because I encouraged to sit here with all three of you today and talk about disability issues openly in front of a crowd during a Town Hall about issues that affect the disability community every single day. And I know that we are making some progress. I know that we have many different challenges, I have. But, we have people like Ted Brown that sends emails of good ideas. And then we call our chief of police right on the spot. I probably could have arranged that a little bit better. But, maybe that was perfect. But, it's normally inspiring to have this conversation. And I appreciate the three of you for being willing to dive into, you know,

what is something that, you know, we are not all experts on but we are passionate about. So, I hope speaking of extra stimulation, I hope that this first few minutes of our conversation got you all thinking about a couple of questions or input that you might have for our group. And so, instead of me asking more questions of our esteemed panel, we have about 15 or 20 more minutes to engage with you all on topics that matter to you. And again, think about healthcare. Think about transportation. Think about employment. Think about housing. You know, what's on your mind? Again, we want this to be a discussion among all of you. And I feel as you can have some input. So with that, I would open it up. Be nice, please.

>> I have the first question right here.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: All right, you are on it!

>> Hi, stranger.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Hey. I've seen you all day.

>> First of all panel, thank you all for being here. My point here is more of a comment, and less of a question. And it relates to the topic and book it on emergency preparedness. We at the league have developed two significant things around emergency preparedness. First of all, we developed a visor card and folks in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community put in there visor. It's an easy to communicate and point and share information when police officers approach but, we also got commitment from the police department, we put one in every single squad car. All 500 squad cars, so every police officer in Fort Wayne has one of those communication cards. So, if they were to come across a person that they knew was the deaf, they would be able to establish that initial line of communication. So, another potential resource to look into developing. And also, we partnered with a local equipment dealer. And they do accessible vehicle modifications. And we had every single firefighter, local fire department, go through accessibility vehicle training. That way when a person with a disability was involved in a car accident, they would know how to get them out.

So, those are two things that I wanted to bring up as potential resources. And things to engage on to improve emergency preparedness.

>> Thank you.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Love that.

>> Couple of other hands popped up.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: I will just say, as you are taken the mic to Rob, as we had discussed that preparedness, specifically for the fire department. And it was my call, or my thought, too definitely engage with our chief after this conversation. So, thank you for putting us on the spot and bringing it up. Such an important topic. And thank you.

>> I was just going to ask the mayor, every March that have disability awareness month for the state of Indiana, and October is national employee people with disability awareness month, try to say that fast. And it seems like both have kind of fallen on dead years. I was wondering what your office could do to kind of bring attention back to those two important months?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: I will make myself a note, and actually I'm going to reach out to the human relations director, Diane Clements, who is the liaison for our disability advisory Council, and I think those are some initiatives that we can make sure that they draw attention to from that, from the board.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: I think that's, Rob, you bring up a good point. When Ted and I were in our prime, and our former careers, you are ensuring that employers were participating very heavily in disability awareness month and disability employment awareness month, I have moved on from my job, and Ted is catching catfish and crabs. It is true, he was in Maine. All right, we are going to move on from that. I was trying to think of something funny. But, we will move on from that. But, we need more champions in our employer community to continue that. Because, you know, what I recall, and Ted, you might be able to speak to this, it was more of employer led and the city would participate to ensure that those, that we are recognizing those important months. But, it was employer driven, I don't know if you have any reflections on that, Ted? But, that may be.

>> TED BROWN: Yeah, Rob, thank you for that question. We had a lot of events, as you know. That is a good point. As employers we should do that. We should work with the service providers and try to put that event back together. I know in Toyota we do celebrate deaf across our entire manufacturing fleet. So, certainly that's a good comment and one that we should take back and have more conversation about that. So, we can continue to raise that awareness with the public. Excel oh, as a member of the disability advisory board, I did want to mention a couple of initiatives that we are working on. And actually have already implemented. So, Luke, your point regarding the visor card, we actually have those printed in use with both the Sheriff's Department. It was a collaboration with the sheriffs department. And we have this available both at the Sheriff's Department, and I'm not sure if we have any at the police department, but we have them at USI as well. But, we do have those in use. But, we are really promoting that is not just for individuals who are deaf. It's also for individuals who are Hard of

Hearing. It could be your grandparents, aunts, uncles, yourself. Anyone needs to be made aware when they are getting pulled over that the stop could be changing because the individual is not able to be heard or the individual does not hear what that law enforcement personnel is telling them. So, it makes them more informed. So, thank you for that. We do actually have that in place. Also, we are working on a new initiative. We are developing an app as well. But, it is designed more for when individuals if an individual is born and they are at the doctor's office and they don't know where to send it down, they hand them a flyer and they say good luck to you. We really don't have a good resource. We have lots of resource guides in the community that are very helpful. But, we really don't have anything from birth forward. Kelsey is here with me from autism Evans well, or everyone. But, we really want to get that developed so we can have a place where people can go and like up one stop shop for people in that situation, because there are so many people in that situations, they don't know where to go. So, that is in the works. Diane Clements from the human relations commissions as well. She oversees our report. And hopefully we will have something to offer soon.

>> Lots of great work just happening, sometimes we just being reminded of what's going on.

>> So I have a question from individuals who I work with at 3 to 3. Is there progress towards shortening waitlist for children eval to be evaluated for autism?

>> Where as our Easter Seals friends to answer that one. I don't know if you guys want to weigh in on that?

>> Thank you. I am Emily Reed Ford. I am the VP of mental health services for Easter Seals. And yes, you mentioned a waitlist. Kids to get any kind of psychological testing. And it is a big problem for us. Quite friendly, that waitlist is around 18 months. Right now. And that is surely due to the lack of providers in the area. And so, we have actually expanded our psychology department. We added three providers. In the past year to help work on that waitlist. And we got some who are doing to test a we, which doesn't seem like a lot, but the test itself takes about 12 hours from start to finish. It takes a lot of manpower hours to get those done. So, we are working on that. The only thing we can really do is to get more providers in our area. And that is going to take a systemwide effort to have more providers. The other thing that's kind of an issue with that is the Medicaid reimbursement rate is so low. And Easterseals does not turn individuals away due to their inability to pay. The prior authorization process is a mess with Medicaid. So, we don't get reimbursed properly for that. But again, we don't limit those at our facility either. So, it is going to take a systemwide effort, but getting more providers who are able to administer those tests is going to be crucial for that.

>> Emily, I think you just gave a little job for representative, Burton. So I will go ahead and fix Medicaid while you are at it.

>> [LAUGHTER].

>> So the chief get homework. Burton gets homework. I do want to thank all of the vendors that are here tonight. Easterseals, I'm sure, Emily, you want like a, I'm going to go and get this microphone. So, thank you for sharing a little bit about what Easterseals faces. And I think to keep in mind too is that there is a focus and I'm not going to speak to it particularly, because I don't know enough information. But I think it's important to note that our stone center, which is right next to us has a laser focus on mental health. And I know I was trying to figure out how do we as a community become the leader in mental health care and the state. And so, I know that the conversation that's continuing to be figuring out because we know that there are a lack of providers, and there is a long wait list. I point that out, because you know, the folks that I speak with about, you know, these issues realize that are actively trying to make the situation better.

>> Ben, thank you. I just want to reiterate a little bit what Bennett just said. Because when kids get an autism diagnosed, it's not just autism. There's also mental health. And so, in order to be qualified or get a diagnosis for also mental health. They are not separate. They are often together. And I think that anything that we can do to better support families whose children are receiving an autism diagnosis, and also, they need some sort of mental health diagnosis as well. It's crucial. And I know Easter Seals is doing great work with the NDC with that. So, kudos to them.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Thank you for the reinforcement. I think we have time for maybe one or two more questions. One of the biggest champion families of disability rights in our community.

>> [LAUGHTER] well, thank you. I think I am crawling back out of my hole. Our son past two years ago and I have taken a much needed grief break. And so, I am Paula G, my husband Bob is here. And what I was particularly interested in Mayor Terri was talking about the dollars for the housing. We built an accessible house 28 years ago for our son, Scott. And before building that house, I started researching maybe even 35 years ago and some communities have visited ability clauses and I don't know if Evansville is doing something like this now, but just a few years ago, there was anything there. And it's a suggestion, because I know there's a lot that goes into this. Such as when those estate dollars, and as far as putting building codes in and who dictates all of that. But, an issue which I'm sure anybody here in a wheelchair comes up against, would you want to go visit somebody and their house is not accessible, you can't get in. All it takes is one step to not be able to get in that building or that house. And the visibility clause, it is so simple, it is the one accessible entrance. One bathroom that you



can get a wheelchair in it, that doesn't mean that everything in their has to be accessible, but to be able to get in there. In the hallways that are, the doorway, 32 inches wide, that is not extremely large. But, that is a very reasonable accessibility clause, and right here in Evansville, for years, probably 25 years, when Bob and I go to pray to homes, and used to the -- \$700,000 homes, if they would have simply put some kind of berm or something on a door anywhere, it doesn't have to be the front door, just to get somebody with a wheelchair in that home. It opens it so much and when you have neighborhoods being built, subdivisions, builders can put those things in so much less expensive for new housing for those things to be put in place right there and then, and then try to go back and modify it later. There was a subdivision going in near us at clear crest and I called the builder and I said "Hey, Aaron, have you thought about this? I would like to provide you some information on this." I sent him an email with information, next thing I go on the website any he had it passed through the lawyer and it was in their covenants. You know, it was something as he, as the developer, took the initiative to do, just simply because I asked. I made him aware of it. So, when you have dollars that you are turning loose of and giving to whoever to do this, please keep this in mind. Visiting is important.

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Can you say that again?

>> Yes, Visitability.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: And I can get a little backup too, our presenting sponsor this evening, AARP, Addison Pollock and I have had multiple conversations about how do we figure out instituting visitability policy at Evansville, and, you know, it is the projects that, you know we grant. And do we ensure, you know, whether that's we have support Habitat for Humanity and many other organizations. As a city, you know, we do ensure that as a policy when we do give those of dollars, that they are creating houses that are visitable. And I think you bring up a great point of incentivizing. In some way, we are having those conversations with the developers, you know, that's obviously a little different than something we have financial skin in the game. But, definitely something that's been on my radar. I can remember five or eight years ago when Alex and I were working on the Habitat Millennial Home back when we were young. And that, I was having conversations with sister Jane about hey, can it Habitat just start building all their homes with visit ability. And, you know, to your point of one neighborhood at a time, you know, that would make a big difference. But, certainly something that is been on our radar.

>> Will, you know, the part of this is when we build this house 28 years ago, when we were in our 40s. And we built it first thinking we were building it for Scott, and now we are in our 70s, it's a home that we can age in place and. We can age in place, and

that so important to not have to. Grandparents or whoever. And we start seeing what comes along with aging. So, thank you for any consideration.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Thank you. And everyone, I really sincerely appreciate the time of this panel. The time for you all to come out during this evening our on Tuesday to have these important conversations and discussion topics. And quite frankly, I look forward to continuing to push forward some of the things that we have discussed like the Blue Envelope Program. I would like to see that happen right there on the spot. And looking more into Visitability. That's what this night and was about. Thank you to our panelists. Thank you so much for all of you being here. Thank you for INSILC for hosting, AARP for sponsorship, thank you, Luke and team and league, all of you traveling down from Indianapolis and from Fort Wayne to host this a great day. If you don't mind, give yourself a round of applause and our panelists.

[APPLAUSE].

>> Ben and I think we have time for a couple more questions, if anybody has them.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Man I had this perfect wrap-up.

>> And I ruined it. I apologize.

>> Yes my name is Craig, by the way. You talked about the Visitability program. I actually have invested myself into three aluminum ramps that I carry to my friends house. It cost me about \$1000 to have those. But I will send a picture of what I got to go over and then I can bring the combination of ramps that I need to get into the house. The one other thing that I wanted to talk about his curb cuts, especially on the west side. I live right off Barker Avenue, and in four years that have been walking Yoko here, we spent about 80% of our time on the streets. Because we can't get on the sidewalks or off of them. There would be a curb cut on one end and not on the other. So, it makes it very difficult to get around. And I do go down Barker Avenue over the bridge at the load Expressway. There are no curb cuts there. I talked to Jim Brinkmeyer and he took some pictures and took them to the city Comptroller. And they said it is in the budget to be fixed in the spring of 2027. So, I think that's a little bit ridiculous having to wait two years for curb cuts so that I can get across the bridge. So, just my two cents on that. But, thank you all.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: We appreciate you bringing that up. Mike Lapinski, our city engineer, sitting in the front row here was a part of a different room than you, correct, and one of the things that you said earlier about curb cuts was trying to figure out what is the best place to start? I mean, do you, do you know where people congregate most? I don't recall the alluded number of curb cuts. 50 per year? So, I gotta be strategic about

the way you do that. So, I would say? Right, maybe a discussion with Mike. I think we can take another conversation with you. But, thank you for bringing that up.

>> It's me again. This is more of a question rather than a comment for Representative Burton. And this is something. But I think the statehouse needs to consider developing a Summer Study Committee for the fiscal impact on community-based living services. And being able to transition people out of institutional settings. And the cost savings that it allows Medicaid to have and the component of those savings being able to be reinvested back into incentivizing accessible housing. Therefore, more people can transition out of institutional settings and therefore, obviously, addressing Medicaid shortfalls and other funding gaps. If that makes sense.

>> ALEX BURTON: I think we are going to be best these going into the next session. No, you are exactly right. Unfortunately, the conversation has been Medicaid case being spending too high, and there has been no solutions to addressing the Medicaid shortfall. And with my first legislative year almost coming to one year, it's one of the things that I'm kind of pivoting to is looking at the Medicaid and bringing forth solutions to address it. One of the things I found out is that our Medicaid spent 45 and younger makes up the majority of our spent. So we are looking for ways to reduce that spend while also providing jobs for those who are 18, looking to get into careers and find pathways, incentivize those employers, we also need to be looking at ways to make housing more readily available and getting away from the institutional-based service into home services. And ways to reduce the cost of what that comes with Medicaid and all of the things. And it is very much the part of our mind aside from the utility costs. Addressing Medicaid is to be the issue that the right that I'm bringing up the family, children, and human affairs committee, simply because we have to do something, because what we are doing is not working.

>> Any other questions or comments?

>> I just wanted to thank you guys. I have been in the ally just in the back. My mom is a member of the aged and disabled population. And then my patience is a licensed social worker. Also benefit from me taking notes and hearing from you all. I just wanted to piggyback Representative Burton, this may be aimed more towards you. But, on the kind of focus, as you have been on of the Medicaid spending, I recognize that counterparts may be sharing that there needs to be cuts. But, as a member of this community, trying to help our aged and disabled population. It is very evident that we need to invest in that. And I don't necessarily have any feedback but I trust in you guys to help with a solution and thank you for having this.

>> ALEX BURTON: Let me answer that question really quickly. As the question went back to Easter Seals, my mind started racing. My apologies if you saw my legs shaking.

It was because my mind started racing of the issues that we have in the social services aspect, I wish there was a program, a fellowship of sorts created for those who are going to college, or those coming right out of high school want to go into social services. We need more people, younger people, getting involved into the social services realm. Whether we are dealing with the youngest Hoosiers, or those who are aging, to make sure that we are not missing any gaps, and as you say, whether it's a teacher shortage, social service shortage, social worker shortage, it's all these things. We have to put people to work and be intentional and making sure that we are getting resources in the right way to solve the problems that we face.

>> Good afternoon, I work with 323. And I am from Columbia. I relocated here in 2005. And to a representative that, you know, something maybe can be impactful. In this level just trying to somebody talk about awareness week about disability. Sometimes when you don't have a disability you don't think that the challenges that people has facing that. Or even, you know, you can come and an accident happened and you didn't think the huge challenges. Oh, you didn't know where to go, you had to do, to function as a family, and I think so make real -- young people since school, yearly child, and they can be, you know, people with disability can come visit them. Learn to interact with that, because so many times you are afraid to go. And maybe irrespective to them, or maybe offended in a way that you don't know how to act in around that. I think so that's a thing that you can put out. And maybe can implement it at school levels. And inviting them. As you are inviting, you know, your own people to hospitals, just go and try to help them. And some doors open to make into places where it's people with disabilities. That's something, you know, you can start and that's the way that you get passionate about something. And you tried it and be open to be able to how --. And I don't know, that is just my comments. I'm passionate about help, and my expertise in Columbia. And anything I can do, you know, for communities. And speaking in a Spanish, too.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: I appreciate that. And I will share again, again I know I keep referring back to our breakout rooms today. There was one that one of our mission, our goals was to do more storytelling around personal stories. So, others understand. And I think that's a day-to-day challenge that we face, just to understand each other, in general. Whether it's, you know, people with disabilities, or whatever it might be. We need a better understanding of each other. So, get pointing it out. We appreciate that. Katie?

>> All right we have five minutes left. For the panel, I see Rob over here.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Is coming your way.

>> I kind of direct this one towards Ted.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: Ted has not been under fire, lately. I'm glad you picked on him.

>> It seems like, as I receive more degrees, I am less able to find jobs. And I wanted to see what you as a former executive, I know you said you started working with them to start the programs for her on the grip, on the floor. But, what about finding jobs for people like me who are highly educated that don't really want to put a gadget or something like that. Federal computers budgets and all that kind of stuff.

>> So, thanks, Rob. Certainly, our focus is there. With it being a manufacturing site, with the core manufacturing jobs on the shop floor. We did place individuals in some administrative roles in our HR teams and our production control team. And, you know, we have small IAS teams there in Princeton, but we are growing that. What I will tell you, Rob is that our program that we created is not just isolated to Toyota Indiana. We have employment programs in our Western Virginia facility, Texas facility, Alabama facility, and our headquarters down in Plano, Texas. So, in our manufacturing site in San Antonio, Texas. So, we are starting one up in Ontario, Canada as well. So, all across our entire fleet here and North America, we are committed to these programs. So, there's going to be additional, and has been additional hiring to that administrative level. So, I've seen engineers that have worked in our facilities and also in our Plano campus as well. As seen a lot of individuals there.

>> One more question and I will shut up for the rest of the evening. And this goes for everybody on the panel. What would you say to someone particularly with a disability who is looking to be more engaged, potentially run for office or serve on board, counsel, Commissioner committee so that they can share their lived experience? We were talking a little bit this morning about how rare it is to have a person with disability like been serving on city Council and needs to happen on local jurisdictions. All across the city of Indiana but all across the nation. So, what would you say to sort of encourage people with disabilities to just be more specifically engaged and potentially run for office?

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: Just do it. There are plenty of opportunities for individuals to serve on boards and commissions. So, personally it will probably November, early December that I will put out our open vacancies for 2026. It will be posted on websites, social media, but there are plenty of opportunities to get engaged. Especially if you are looking to run for office or anything. Make sure your support system. And that is for everybody. You know, we can't do this work if we don't have a strong circle of people around us helping ensure that personally, we are taking care of ourselves so we can start the committee. So, make sure your support system is solid. Do your homework on the positions that have available. And if not, then running for office, you know, attended

meetings like this. And I will tell you, we have our travel and City Hall was once a fourth. And we have Park chat right now at that seek a new some community center. Two of our words are talking about all the parts, and the second and fourth word, and third and fourth word. But, we need people to show up and share their voices. We are going to continue to do as a city, as much to engage the community in decisions that we have to be made, whether that's through surveys, in person meetings like this. And even text, and better use of technology to get feedback. Just participate. And if you want to run for office, just do it.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: She said it perfect.

>> TED BROWN: And I will just add, from some things to share for smaller steps, you know, as members of the ARC community as well as AH are Q, has a group called Self advocates of Indiana. There's a chapter down here in Evansville. It allows individuals with disabilities to learn how to advocate for themselves. I think it's a great stepping stone if you have, you know, if you want to learn how to express your voice. And as a board member, of Special Olympics, rely on self advocates. To our board. They are actually on our board as well to tell us what they need in the athletic experience. So, I think those are things in small ways that you came start getting involved.

>> STEPHANIE TERRY: And realize, you don't have to be an expert. I mean, Alex and I don't know everything. All I think the mayor knows everything. But we simply have a passion for the community to be a better place. And that's it. I think that's the first step. Go for it. That's it.

>> This is the final question.

>> All right so this is Casey speaking. I am the chair in INSILC and also employee of the Helen Keller national Center for deafblind youth and adults. As a person who is deafblind, who has vision and hearing loss, I just want to encourage you to include those members in the community when you decide how to put out your questionnaires, your surveys and those types of things. As we were talking about this morning was having that axis. Flyers, you get the big graphic flyers. Someone can't read it. Someone using a screen reader, you have effectively eliminated them from being able to access that. So, those are the things that, you know, I really encourage you to involve the members of this community to give that input. And think about that, especially when you are looking at your housing and so forth. Because, you know, as our community is aging, not just those of us that have disabilities right now, but our parents, grandparents, or losing their vision, hearing, and as you set those things up, it's not all physical disabilities. So just something to keep in mind as far as we are looking at all those items, you know, there are lots of things out there. The centers, all of them that

are in the room, all of the different agencies and stuff, are here as resources. So, please, reach out. We are here, we all want to be involved.

>> Rob said to remember that not all disabilities are visible.

Okay so that concludes the Q&A with our panel. We are going to recall back to when Ben did a really good auto for that.

>> BEN TROCKMAN: That's right!

>> Did a really good auto for that. I will pass the mic to Mike from INSILC and he is going to give us some final remarks and we have about 30 minutes left in the event. Okay?

>> Thanks, Katie. And just a couple of things. My outro won't be as elegant as a bents. So I will get that done. So, thank you to Mary, stayed represented, Alex Burton, former Toyota executive Ted Brown and Evansville city Council, President, Ben Trockman. Let's give them a round of applause.

[APPLAUSE].

And I would leave everybody in this room with two action items. So, we have a paper copy of the survey, as well as a QR code that you can access that we would love for you to do. Tell us more about what is going on in our community, and about thoughts of tonight's and today's events. And also, you can there is a paper copy to sign up for our newsletter, or you can do that via QR code as well. This is the best way that you can stay up-to-date on INSILC's upcoming events. And our next town halls and other events that we have plan. And then we will be here until 6 PM. So, please use the rest of the time to visit our vendors and network amongst yourselves. Thank you all for your time. We appreciate it.