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Dear Friends,

Welcome to our 2023 Impact Report, where we reflect on our progress toward fulfilling our mission, highlight the contributions of our Members and partners, and share our plans for the future.

As we seek to increase civic engagement and diverse leadership by developing and building a network of leaders with disabilities, we celebrate that our Members and partners provide the foundation for this work. The progress we make towards realizing our vision — that people with disabilities will lead with power and influence for full participation and equal opportunity as a vital part of our civic fabric — is made possible because of you. Thank you.

In the following pages, we highlight two Disability Lead Members, Richard Costes and Ben Salentine, and a new funding partner, Healthcare Service Corporation (HCSC), who demonstrate that fostering and advancing disabled leadership results in stronger and more equitable systems for all. At the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion, Richard and Ben create equitable and inclusive processes for conducting business with the State of Illinois, and they enhance the State’s workplace culture so people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas are respected and valued. At HCSC, a longstanding corporate commitment to disability inclusion means significant investment in the company’s In-Abled employee resource group from the top, and as a result, HCSC is creating welcoming spaces for disabled employees to lead and drive business decisions that are inclusive of disabled employees and customers.
Along with highlighting these incredible Members and funder partners, Disability Lead is proud to share progress towards our strategic goals, positioning us to expand our mission in 2024:

**Connections**

In 2023, Disability Lead identified and made connections to more than 150 opportunities for our Members with 51 successful connections.

Some highlights include:

- **Sydney Holman** was appointed the Deputy Mayor of Intergovernmental Affairs at the City of Chicago
- **Zhen Heinemann** and **Brittney Hyde** joined the Board of Directors of Full Spectrum Features
- **Kevin Irvine** joined the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board of the State of Illinois Office of the Governor and the Advisory Board of Docs with Disabilities
- **Vanessa Harris** was named one of Field Foundation’s 2023 Leaders for a New Chicago

With advancements like these and others over the year, Disability Lead is addressing the problem of underrepresentation of individuals with disabilities in civic and professional leadership positions. Every day, our Members, in the spheres where they have chosen to lead, are influencing policy and decision-making impacting the lives of thousands in the Chicago region and beyond.

**Institute**

In December, Disability Lead was thrilled to announce the 2024 class — with 21 Fellows, it is the largest cohort we’ve ever had! We are deliberate and intentional in our recruiting efforts, as we seek to bring forward authentic intersectional leadership. The 2024 Fellows represent an incredible range of backgrounds and experiences across fields and
sectors, from nonprofit to corporate, public to small business. We also welcomed three new Members to our Network, and celebrated the **16 Fellows graduating from the 2023 Institute** who are now Members!

Our goal is that our **Network** will reflect the diversity of our region, and this year was no exception: 60% of selected Fellows are people of color; 80% of applicants and Fellows identified with a disability other than physical; we saw an increase in applicants who identify as transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming/non-binary; and 48% identified their sexuality as other than heterosexual. Overall, we had our greatest applicant numbers since 2019.

**Staff Growth**

Our organization’s capacity grew significantly in 2023, with key hires expanding our expertise and capacity in crucial areas, including **Clare Killy** in the newly established Education and Learning Services Manager role. This pivotal role elevates Disability Lead’s capacity to deliver learning opportunities and support to all Members. Clare is a seasoned nonprofit leader and licensed educator with experience as a teacher, advocate, inclusion consultant, and program director across diverse environments and was a Disability Lead Fellow in 2022. **Brittney Grant** also joined the team as Programs Coordinator and brings valuable nonprofit marketing and administrative experience to Disability Lead.

As we celebrate these accomplishments in 2023 and look ahead with excitement to strengthening and expanding disabled leadership in 2024, we thank you for your belief in Disability Lead’s mission and vision, and your support of our work. We remain focused on building the next generation of leaders with disabilities who will bring innovative solutions to meet our society’s greatest challenges.

With gratitude,

Emily Blum,  
*Executive Director*

Ann Manikas,  
*Board Chair*
NEW INITIATIVES

Disability Leadership Summit

Recognizing the need for professional development opportunities and networks designed to support the advancement of disabled professionals in the workplace, Disability Lead was proud to partner with an Advisory Group composed of a number of our Members and other experts in DEI to launch the Summit in 2023. The inaugural Disability Leadership Summit, an online conference designed by and for disabled professionals and allies, was held over two half days in January 2024. We welcomed 100 attendees from across the country and from various sectors with 90% of participants identifying as disabled.

“This was above and beyond one of the most engaging professional experiences I have had.”
— 2024 Summit Advisory Group member

The Disability Leadership Summit will be held annually, with opportunities for participants to reconnect and network throughout the year. We are incredibly excited to be extending Disability Lead’s sphere of influence nationally, as the Summit is the first ongoing initiative we offer that is open to disabled professionals from beyond the Chicago region. We look forward to hosting the 2nd Annual Disability Leadership Summit in February 2025. For more information, including opportunities to sponsor or present, please visit the Summit website.
Model Replication and Expansion

Disability leadership in civic and professional spaces is needed beyond the Chicago region, and we believe Disability Lead's unique model is one that can be adapted in communities across the nation. As part of our strategic planning effort, we identified that expansion is both a goal and ongoing area of focus because other geographies need intersectional disability leadership and leaders who can bring perspectives that span the rich diversity of lived experiences.

Last year, we were excited to share that we identified the first location for our pilot expansion in the Pittsburgh region of Pennsylvania. Recognizing that this initiative can only be successful with local input and leadership, we spent most of 2023 listening and learning. We participated in meetings with more than 100 diverse stakeholders representing more than 70 organizations, supported the formation of a local Steering Committee, and are now engaged in a formal replication and sustainability assessment to determine next steps. Our goal for 2024 is to create a solid foundation for a three-year rollout of our project to replicate the Disability Lead model in Southwestern Pennsylvania.
MEMBERS HIGHLIGHT

MAKING ILLINOIS STATE CONTRACTING MORE EQUITABLE

by Megan Doherty, 2021 Fellow

Disabled people are the largest minority group in the United States, yet are often left out of diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

“The disability community is very underrepresented in the workforce,” said C. Richard Costes, a Commissioner for the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI). “In fact, we’re underrepresented wherever we are.”

The Commission aims to help minorities find access to jobs and contract opportunities within Illinois. This involves both working to enhance workplace culture so people of diverse backgrounds are respected and valued, as well as making sure underrepresented people are given a fair shake when it comes to state contracts.

“Disabled people need a voice in state government,” said Costes, who was a 2020 Disability Lead Fellow. “I’m also a person of color, and I’m proud to represent both aspects of my identity in the state of Illinois.”

Governor Pritzker appointed Costes to the CEI in October 2022, and the Illinois Senate confirmed his appointment in November 2023. His colleague Ben Salentine, also a Disability Lead Member, was appointed in June 2023, and is awaiting his Senate approval. Ever since, they’ve worked tirelessly to make sure conversations about inequality in business across the state benefit from a disability perspective.
“Our service on the Commission means expanding opportunities for disabled business owners in Illinois,” said Salentine. “For too long we’ve been left out of programs and services for minorities, but we’re changing that.”

Before the CEI was launched in January 2022, Illinois Central Management Services tried to take on all this work by itself, and was frequently overwhelmed. They saw a need to create a separate entity that would focus completely on equity and inclusion.

“Being a new Commission, we’re still getting our feet under us. But we’re growing and changing every day,” said Costes, who also serves on the boards of the National Theater of the Deaf and the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Arts Festival, and is a Councilmember of 3Arts.

Previously, the state’s aspirational goal was for 20% of procurements to be awarded to minority groups, with at least 2% of contracts going to businesses owned by persons with disabilities. Now, the overall target has been increased to 30%, with at least 4% specified for disabled suppliers. Now that people like Costes and Salentine are at the table, they can push for policy and legislation that accounts for the needs — and even the existence — of people with disabilities.

Expanding supplier diversity efforts to include disability will support individuals and families in overcoming the financial hurdles that disabled people have long been subjected to. The increased financial stability these efforts will afford to disabled contractors comes with positive ripple effects, such as sustainable housing and access to quality healthcare.

“Just like Disability Lead is bringing disabled leaders into civic engagement, we’re doing it in a different space. These efforts represent wealth-building opportunities that have long been non-existent in the disability community,” said Salentine, who is on the boards of the Progress Center for Independent Living as well as the Association of People Supporting Employment First.

“**Illinois is ahead of the game and a leader in this,**” said Salentine. “**It means the world to me to be able to influence policy for us in such a state as Illinois.**”
Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC) serves nearly 23 million members across the United States through its portfolio of benefit solutions, including health coverage options for employers, individuals and families and Medicare and Medicaid plans. It also offers products and services such as pharmacy solutions, life and dental insurance, and health data technology. Given its role in healthcare service and product delivery to such a large and diverse customer base, HCSC recognizes that promoting an inclusive workplace culture is critical not just for establishing strong hiring and retention practices, but also for providing superior customer solutions and service.

In early 2023, when HCSC executive Manika Turnbull, Ph.D., senior vice president and chief Human Resources officer at HCSC, learned about Disability Lead’s ambition to launch the Summit, she saw the initiative’s potential to provide an engaging professional development opportunity for HCSC’s employees and to elevate and promote HCSC’s commitment to developing inclusive leadership. Disability Lead was thrilled that HCSC signed on as the first corporate sponsor of the Disability Leadership Summit.
“Health Care Service Corporation is proudly committed to promoting a culture of respect and inclusiveness and pleased to partner with Disability Lead to explore new professional development opportunities for our leaders with disabilities.” — Manika Turnbull

HCSC’s involvement with the Summit went beyond financial support. In fact, HCSC’s senior management team recommended two HCSC employees serve on the Advisory Group to guide the development of the Summit’s core objectives, content, and delivery.

A’ishah Amatullah, a business consultant in Medicare delivery, and Joshua Fletcher, a senior product delivery specialist, are co-chairs of HCSC’s In-Abled BRG, and joined the Summit Advisory Group with enthusiasm. HCSC has nine business resource groups (BRGs) that provide all employees with the opportunity to connect with others who share similar backgrounds, identities, and interests. Through volunteer opportunities, employee engagement, and targeted programs, employees advance inclusion at work and in their communities. BRGs also provide critical pathways for leadership development. A’ishah and Joshua are two such examples — their leadership within HCSC grew to include leadership beyond, as they served on the Summit Advisory Group and then served in leadership roles at the Summit itself, hosting interactive roundtable discussions on common issues and opportunities disabled employees experience in the workplace.

“We’re incredibly grateful to HCSC for their investment in our vision and for their active participation in developing the Summit. A’ishah and Josh, especially, brought valuable perspectives on current best practices for leveraging BRGs for inclusive leadership development. They were so generous to share their insight with us and all the Summit attendees.” — Clare Killy
88% of Members Actively Support Disability Lead’s Mission and Make Key Contributions to our Success

- 51.0% Donors
- 15.5% Ambassadors
- 11.0% Program Contributors
- 1.5% Board Cmte Members
- 5.5% Nominators
- 5.5% Mentors
- 10.5% Connectors
Thank you to our generous funding partners who help Disability Lead fulfill our mission to increase civic engagement and diverse leadership in the Chicago region by developing and building a network of leaders with disabilities — consistent with the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Corporations, Foundations, Government & Organizations

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### Individuals

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Lindsay Drexler*
Natae Eaves
Lincoln Edwards*
Emlyn Eisenach
Molly Rose Elkins-Ryan
Dr Lisa Elliott*
Carrie Ellis
Rosalyn Emerson
Emma Farley
Blair Findlay
Margaret Fink
Cara Frank
Ladonna Freidheim
Barbara Galvin
Claude Gibson
Faye and Nigel Gillett
Jay Gilmore
Ericca Glasgow*
Andrea Glosser
Kate Gonzalez
Marlene Green
Jo Greep
LaShon Gurrola*
Emily Harris*
Mark Harris
Vanessa Harris*
Tanja Hayes
Zhen Heinemann*
Sarah Helm
Brian Heyburn*+
Kim Holmes and Timothy Kaczocha
Scott Hughes
Michelle Hutchinson
Sharon Hutchinson
Brittney Hyde*
Beth Jacobs
Gianne James
Justine Jentes
Robert Johnson
Jean Keleher and Mickle Maher
Dom Kelly+
Evelyn Keolian*
Clare Killy*
Diane Knoepke
Keishay Knowles
Bruce Koff and Mitchell Channon
Murthy Konda
Beth Lange
Greg Lauman
Tuyet Le*
Anna Lee
Wayne Lewis-Hutchinson
Ann Manikas* and David Isaacson
Phillip/Katherine Manriquez
Tess Mattingly+
Margaret Rose McDonnell
Mary Jo McKeag
Lisa Meeks
Peter Meiland
Norma Jane Mejias*
Ambar Mentor-Truppa
Dominic Miller
Heidi Musser
Anne Nash*+
Ebele Okoli
Madison Oliver*
Barbara Padilla*
Jada Palmer
Elton Parker
Darryl Payne
Aurie Pennick
Jami Petner-Arrey
Charisse Price
Jennifer "JP" Price*
Anne Renna
Jasmine Reynolds
Alan Richmond+
Risa Jaz Rifkind*
Steven Rifkind
Branson Robinson
Brian Rohde*
Chaya Rubenstein
Kathy Ryg
Stacy Scapino and Kelsey Burr
Cinnamon Scott
Jai Sen
Kruti Shah*
Karen Sheley*+
Kiel Smith
Lee Smith and Wendy Leopold
Kyle Sneed
Kimberley Spire-Oh
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* Denotes Disability Lead Member
+ Denotes Changemaker Circle recurring donor

Disability Lead makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of this listing. Please contact Anne Renna at 312-730-5883 or arenna@disabilitylead.org if your name was omitted or there was an error in your listing. Thank you.

**Board of Directors**

**Chair**
Ann Manikas*+, *American Medical Association*

**Vice Chair**
Kenton Klaus+, *Deloitte and DePaul University*

**Secretary**
Natae Eaves+, *J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.*

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Mary Anderson, *AARP*

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*Kim B. Holmes Consulting*

**Anna Lee,**
*United Way of Chicagoland*

**Lora Laverty,**
*CDW Corporation*

**Karen Tamley*,**
*Access Living*

**Rebecca Williford,**
*Disability Rights Advocates*

* Denotes Disability Lead Member
+ Denotes Officer
Members in Memoriam

Disability Lead, our Network, and the disability community at large lost three incredible leaders and Members in 2023. Andrés Gallegos, Jack Catlin, and Alice Palmer. Andrés and Jack were instrumental in our founding as an organization, and Andrés was currently serving on our Board of Directors at the time of his death. Alice was an activist, author and state Senator. All were pillars of the disability community, and all served as mentors to our staff, Fellows, and others in Disability Lead’s network. Their friendship, guidance, and wisdom will be greatly missed by all.
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

JANUARY 1, 2023 TO DECEMBER 31, 2023

Total Income: $1,198,752

- Foundations: $996,562
- Corporations, Corporate Foundations: $109,800
- Individuals: $51,304
- In-Kind Donation: $10,073
- Other Income: $16,013

Program Services: $15,000
Expenses

$576,439
Programs

$79,735
Management & General

$52,778
Fundraising

Total $708,952