

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



PROCLAMATION BY THE GOVERNOR

WHEREAS, October 2025 marks the 81st anniversary of the annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which focuses on education around disability employment issues, the importance of inclusive policies and practices, and celebrates the many and varied ways America's workers with disabilities participate in the workforce; and

WHEREAS, in 1945, NDEAM began as a week, recognizing solely people with physical disabilities, however, in 1988, Congress designated a full month for disability employment awareness each year and expanded its scope to include people with all kinds of disabilities; and

WHEREAS, as an Employment First state, Pennsylvania considers Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) to be the first consideration and preferred outcome of publicly funded education, training, and employment related services, and Act 36 of 2018 created the Governor's Cabinet for People with Disabilities and the Employment First Oversight Commission to ensure implementation of this policy; and

WHEREAS, nearly 76,500 Pennsylvanians with a disability currently receive services through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and earn about \$19 per hour, and with First Lady Lori Shapiro's leadership guidance and support, employers like Sheetz and Wawa are partnering with OVR to expand access to good-paying jobs for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) continues to see steady growth in the number of individuals enrolled for services who have obtained or have a goal to obtain CIE; and

WHEREAS, in 2026, the Commonwealth strengthened the rights and protections of Pennsylvanians with disabilities with three new executive orders to reaffirm the Commonwealth's disability nondiscrimination policy, establish new data privacy protections, reauthorize the Developmental Disabilities Council, and create the new Governor's advisory commission focused solely on people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, this year's NDEAM theme of "Celebrating Value and Talent" recognizes the skills and contributions that people with disabilities add to the Commonwealth's workplaces, communities, and economy and upholds the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's steadfast commitment to working alongside advocates, providers, and community partners to strengthen the care workforce, make sure every Pennsylvania can live with dignity, independence, and respect, and increase access to high-quality, good-paying jobs for all Pennsylvanians, including Pennsylvania's with disabilities, every month of the year.

THEREFORE, I, Josh Shapiro, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim October 2026 to be

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

I encourage all Pennsylvanians to recognize that workplaces that include and embrace all people, including people with disabilities, are key to creating an equitable community and society as well as a robust and vibrant economy.



GIVEN under my hand and the Seal of the Governor, at the City of Harrisburg, on this twenty-first day of September two thousand twenty-six, the year of the Commonwealth the two hundred fifty-first.

Governor Josh Shapiro

First Lady Lori Shapiro