



## **ADA Live! Episode 102: Improving Employment Outcomes People with Disabilities**

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**Christine Griffin:** Hi, I'm Christine Griffin and you are listening to ADA Live!.

(singing) Yo. Hi, Let's go, rolling.

**Barry Whaley:**

Hi everybody. On behalf of the Southeast ADA Center, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University and the ADA National Network, welcome to ADA Live!. I'm Barry Whaley, Director at Southeast ADA Center. As a reminder, listening audience, if you have questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act, you can use our online form anytime at [adalive.org](https://adalive.org).

**Barry Whaley:**

The labor force participation rate for people with disabilities remains stubbornly low in the United States. In December of 2021, for instance, only 22.3% of people with disabilities were active in the workforce. Additionally, the unemployment rate for people with

disabilities is historically twice the unemployment rate for people who do not identify as having a disability.

**Barry Whaley:**

Today, to discuss employment for people with disabilities, we welcome Christine Griffin. She's the Senior Executive Search Consultant with Bender Consulting Services Incorporated. Our host today is Dr. Peter Blanck, university professor and chairman of the Burton Blatt Institute. Today, we'll focus on topics of what can be done to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities, how far we've come and how far we still have to go. We'll also discuss the next generation of leaders in disability and employment. Christine, welcome to the show and Peter, I'll turn it over to you.

**Peter Blanck:**

Thank you, Barry and Chris, Christine, it's such an honor and pleasure to be with one of my heroes in this disability rights movement. We've known each other for too long and we're going to cover some ground that's low hanging fruit for you today, Chris. But you're a lawyer, you're a former deputy director at Office of Personnel Management, you're an EEOC commissioner.

**Peter Blanck:**

If I may, because I've never asked you this, start back when you were a teenager or a young girl, did you ever think your life would take this course, this path? Did you ever think you would become a civil rights champion?

**Christine Griffin:**

Not in your life. I never thought of it one bit. As a matter of fact, I went to school, I went into the United States Army not long after high school, got the GI Bill so I could afford to go to college. I grew up in a big family of seven and my parents really didn't have the money to send us to college.

**Christine Griffin:**

I went to college, got a degree in marine engineering and worked as an engineer for the Food and Drug Administration. When I went to law school, I was a woman with a disability already, for 10 years, and I knew nothing about disability rights law. I went as an engineer, but thinking I would probably pursue a career in food and drug law enforcement or possibly patent law.

**Christine Griffin:**

It was 1990 when I started law school and it wasn't until I got to law school that I learned there was this body of law, the Rehab Act, the ADA was just passing and everyone talking about it that I realized that there was something behind, whenever I in the workplace or somewhere else felt like I was being dealt with unfairly based on my disability, I would just say, "I don't think that's fair."

**Christine Griffin:**

That would get such a reaction. I thought I was a fabulous self-advocate for myself. What I realized was that many years later, is that people understood that there was a body of law, that there was an appeal or a complaint process when you didn't think things were fair in the workplace, and yet, I didn't know anything about it.

**Christine Griffin:**

Here, I go off to law school, I learn about the Rehab Act, the ADA had just passed. Everyone was talking about it and I thought, wow, this is unbelievable. My first summer job, I get into the ADA network training put on by EEOC and DOJ. I don't know if you remember this or not, but they train 400 people with disabilities from across the country, then invited 100 of us back for more advanced training.

**Christine Griffin:**

Frankly, Peter, that training changed my life and changed my career focus. I remember going through the training and did the first phase in D.C. and calling my boyfriend at the time, who became my husband, calling Phillip and saying, "Hey, you know that idea about me going to law school and making lots of money?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I think that

just went out the window. I think I'm going to be doing public interest law." Thankfully, he thought it was great, and that's what I went on to do.

**Peter Blanck:**

You were the first generation, you started law school when the ADA was passed, literally.

**Christine Griffin:**

Exactly, the same year. Yep.

**Peter Blanck:**

Then you went into these trainings with DOJ and EEOC. Who were some of the folks you were meeting that today are your colleagues?

**Christine Griffin:**

Everybody. I met all the people from DREDF I met Liz Savage. Liz Savage had a big impact on my training and on my career, Becky [inaudible 00:05:44] I can still see Becky coming into the room. At the time, she had long blonde here. There were all these famous advocates. I didn't know they were famous advocates at the time, but I got to know them.

**Christine Griffin:**

I think Judy Human showed up for part of the training. The people who were at DOJ at the time, [inaudible 00:06:06] When you think about the two agencies getting together and deciding to do this type of a training, investing in advocates all over the country, it's just amazing. I always wanted to see it replicated and done multiple times, but no one's ever really done it. That was just amazing.

**Christine Griffin:**

You want to know how I get into that training? I had my first summer job out of law school, and I was working for Tom O'Neill, Tip O'Neill's son who had lobbying practice in Boston. I was working for him, and he said to me, "I'm hiring you this summer. I want you to find

out everything you can about this new law and how it's going to impact my clients once it becomes effective."

**Christine Griffin:**

I said, "Okay, I'm going to do it." I found out that this was going to be happening and you couldn't get in. It was already filled, and they were really adamant. Nope, Nope. Besides, I wasn't an advocate, I didn't have a background in disability advocacy. I just happened to be a person of the disability. He called Kennedy's office, and Kennedy's folks, I don't know what they did, but they got me into that training and it really changed my life. All the work I've done since then, I probably wouldn't have done it if that didn't happen in the summer.

**Peter Blanck:**

It's very interesting, Chris, in 1990, I was a young lawyer. I had just finished a clerkship. I was doing empirical work in this area, primarily in mental health, and I took a job at a law firm called Covington & Burling, a big old law firm in Washington, D.C. The moment I got there in 1990, they said, "Our clients want to know about this new thing, this disability law. Get up to the Hill and tell us what's going."

**Peter Blanck:**

Then, like you, all of a sudden, you become the expert at the place. Now, I know we're going to talk about employment today, but we have to have some sort of baseline, because everybody says, which I disagree with, that in many ways, the ADA has not fulfilled its expectations to increase the employment of people with disabilities.

**Peter Blanck:**

Of course, that's a very complicated question, that's tied to many things, but when you were with those group of people and early on, what were the aspirations? Did you believe that this was going to solve many of the evils or were you more realistic?

**Christine Griffin:**

I drank the Kool-Aid, Peter. I was so excited. I thought this was going to just really change everything. At that time, even though I didn't know employment law or anything like that yet, what I did know is that when I was in the workforce working and I had been for quite some time before I went to law school, I knew that working side by side with people without disabilities, who were probably nervous when I first started. But once I proved that I could do the job as well as they could, that they accepted you, and the disability disappeared, not entirely, but for the most part, it really did. People feeling uncomfortable around you and not knowing what to say or do, all of that really disappeared, and I never saw that happen in school or other places entirely. But I saw it happen in the workplace.

**Christine Griffin:**

I went into this training knowing that the workplace was really, really an important place for people with disabilities to be. I really believe that if we could get into the workplace in a huge number, and I still believe this, I think we would change society's views overall, and we would be more accepted. I was very excited when I started learning about this new law.

**Christine Griffin:**

I remember calling Phil and saying, "I want to be a part of this evolution of new law, that's really going to change how people feel about people with disabilities overall." I really believed it, and it has happened to some degree, Peter. I agree with you, it wasn't a total loss. It hasn't panned out exactly the way we thought.

**Peter Blanck:**

When, Chris, did you begin to appreciate or realize with your cohort that, it's a little more complicated than we thought, and this employment issue is something that we're going to have to take a harder look at, even beyond the ADA?

**Christine Griffin:**

Well, I think when I got to... I got a fellowship out of law school, a Skadden Fellowship, and I proposed this project to the Disability Law Center, who was a nonprofit in Boston

doing disability rights law, really the only one. I proposed that I do outreach to underserved communities to teach them about the ADA. I thought I was smart and I went to law school and I didn't know anything about disability rights law, the average person isn't going to know either, and the average person with the disability isn't going to know that they have rights, and I wanted everyone to know about it.

**Christine Griffin:**

I went to the law center and I had a supervisor there who did a lot of employment discrimination work based on disabilities. She became my mentor as well as my supervisor. What I learned from her, hiring cases are almost impossible, unless you have a smoking gun where someone says, "We are not hiring you because of you're a woman, you're black, you have a disability." Whatever it is. Unless you have that smoking gun, it's very difficult to prove they didn't hire you based on whatever the issue is that you're claiming discrimination of.

**Christine Griffin:**

I learned that. I learned tackling this from a hiring point of view was going to be very difficult. But what I also learned and where I think we've been very successful and there's no way of quantifying this, and I wish we had thought about this from the beginning, is I think we have kept people employed that otherwise wouldn't have been employed because they got an accommodation and could stay in the workplace. That was much easier to prove. Whether it was through litigation, negotiation or anything like that, employees started to really embrace... I wouldn't say embrace, they didn't love it, but they got to understand that they had to stop providing accommodations for people.

**Christine Griffin:**

The average person who probably didn't think they had a disability, but now had some rights because the ADA was passed. Someone with diabetes, someone with epilepsy, someone who had a disability and was working along for years, but then all of a sudden had an issue. Whether they needed to take a break to eat something at a certain time because of their diabetes or whether they needed time off to go to a doctor's appointment

because they had cancer or they were getting chemotherapy. All of a sudden, now, they were getting these accommodations.

**Christine Griffin:**

Years before that, not many years before that, they would've been fired. They would've been told outright, "Sorry, you have this condition and it's interfering with your work and we're going to fire you." You had no protection.

**Christine Griffin:**

I think what has happened is, we have kept... I couldn't even tell you a number. I'd like to say millions of people employed because they got accommodations for their disability. I think that's where we've been successful, and we just haven't been able to quantify it, because not all of it is litigated, not all of it is complained about. In fact, I think the majority of it happens. I think people ask for an accommodation and if it's reasonable, the employer provides it because they know they have to.

**Peter Blanck:**

I tend to agree with the movie, It's a Wonderful Life is one of my favorite movies, with George Bailey sees what life would be like without him being alive. I always ask the question, what would America be like if there had been no ADA, I think it would be pretty bleak. We all are dealing with the high aspirations for a employment, which was a bit of an overstatement because of the complicated nature of benefits and workforce issues beyond disability. You were deputy director of Office of Personnel Management, OPM. Was that before you were at the EEOC?

**Christine Griffin:**

I went to EEOC first as an attorney advisor for Paul Igasaki, who was the vice chair under Clinton.

**Peter Blanck:**

When was that? That was in the mid-'90s?

**Christine Griffin:**

Yep. That was after my fellowship, and it was in the mid-'90. Then I went back to Massachusetts when the director job for the Disability Law Center opened up and a couple of people called me and said, "You should apply." I decided, yeah, that's a great idea. I'd get some management experience. I went back to Massachusetts as director of the Disability Law Center.

**Christine Griffin:**

After I was there as director for about 10 years, [inaudible 00:15:29] called me and he said, "Oh my God, Paul Miller's leaving EEOC. You should really think about becoming a commissioner." At first, really, I said, "No, no, I like what I'm doing. I love my job." But then we talked about it a few more times, and then I talked to Senator Kennedy about it and we decided this was a good career move for me, but also good for the community. Then I went back as commissioner. I didn't go to OPM until Obama was elected.

**Peter Blanck:**

But before we get the EEOC years, Tom Harkin was one of my mentors from being in Iowa. Kennedy, obviously, was yours.

**Christine Griffin:**

Yes. Yeah.

**Peter Blanck:**

What do you want to say about Edward Kennedy briefly and how he influenced the disability movement in the '90s? Then I want to turn back to the EEOC.

**Christine Griffin:**

He was amazing. I don't think most people realized what he did. Not only everybody, poor people in general. But for people with disabilities, I mean, he just got it. He got that we wanted to be included. He never treated anyone with a disability, any different than he would've treated some CEO of a company coming into his office. He was just like that.

**Christine Griffin:**

I find a lot of people in his family are like that. He was just an amazing, amazing guy. He did so much for this community. From little things on benefits, to the passage of the ADA. He was in there fighting for this tooth and nail, with Harkin, and with some other folk. I can't say enough about what he's done for me personally, and what he's done for the community.

**Peter Blanck:**

By the way, for the folks listening to your Boston accent, I had a case, I think it was in Boston at one point. The judge walked in, it was a very cold day, and he said, "I'm leaving my [inaudible 00:17:23] on. All of us looked around, and it was, what was that? Some sort of light or something? Then he pointed to his [inaudible 00:17:33]

**Christine Griffin:**

That's so funny.

**Peter Blanck:**

You got to the EEOC. Even though in the '90s we had Bragdon and Omstead, the soon after. The '90s wasn't a particularly friendly Supreme Court time to the EEOC.

**Christine Griffin:**

It was horrible.

**Peter Blanck:**

What was going on inside the EEOC?

**Christine Griffin:**

Peter, it was so interesting. You had Peggy, who was head of legal counsel, Peggy Mastroianni.

**Peter Blanck:**

Oh, yes.

**Christine Griffin:**

She was head of the legal council department at EEOC. There were just tons of meetings. I remember sitting in commissioner Miller's office, because I was the disability person from the vice chair's office. I went to all these great meetings where I learned so much. We would sit in his office, and of course, I'd go in with my Boston accident and say, "Hey, commissioner Miller, how are you?" He would laugh and make fun of me.

**Christine Griffin:**

But we would sit in his office and we would talk about all these cases. We were literally watching, at that time, these cases in the lower courts really undermining the very intent of the law. We were scared to death. Of course, as these cases wound their way up to the Supreme Court, it was like... I remember someone saying this, it was a friend of mine. She said, it's like watching a cab being stripped on the side of the road. Every time you go by there's another piece taken. The hubcap's gone, the wheel's gone, this is gone.

**Peter Blanck:**

These are cases like the Sutton trilogy, and the Toyota.

**Christine Griffin:**

Yes, exactly. Toyota, Sutton, United Airlines. Although, some of them arguably never should have got up to the Supreme Court, but they did, and they made bad law.

**Peter Blanck:**

I was privileged to represent Dick Thornburgh, Governor Thornburgh, the attorney general Thornburgh in the Supreme Court, in the Chevron v. Echazabal case. That case involved a problem that the EEOC had put on itself, we can talk about it, with regard to interpreting the direct threat provision that it included-

**Christine Griffin:**

Yes.

**Peter Blanck:**

... direct to self. Long story short, Justice Kennedy, who was an otherwise thoughtful justice, I thought, said at the oral argument, "You mean that employers are supposed to hire suicidal employees?" We thought to ourselves, yeah, everybody with a disability is suicidal. Lost nine nothing on the grounds that the direct threat defense in employment was brought enough to include not only threat to others, but threat to self. How long were you on the EEOC as a commissioner?

**Christine Griffin:**

EEOC as a commissioner, I was there from 2006 to 2010.

**Peter Blanck:**

What would you say were the achievements you're most proud of? Of course, you had the ADA Amendments Act in 2008, which did some of that problematic stuff. What were you proud of during that-

**Christine Griffin:**

I think, what I was most proud of was my work that I did on federal employment of people with disabilities. I think I raised the level of awareness around that issue, actually, to such a height that when Obama was elected, people from his administration called me and said, "Okay, big mouth. You've said all the problems related to employment of people with

disabilities in the federal workforce and diversity and inclusion problems are all can be for at OPM. How would you like to go over and fix them?"

**Christine Griffin:**

I certainly talked a lot about it. I was mostly under the Bush administration. While that rendered you as a democratic commissioner, somewhat powerless, it did give you still a soapbox to stand on talk about things. I got to tell you, I went to the EEOC as a commissioner with very different ideas in my head about what I was going to accomplish.

**Christine Griffin:**

Here's what I was going to do, I was going to get to the EEOC, and I was going to find a way to... Probably, I would have to do it for Congress, but I was going to changed the definition of individuals with disabilities, who were employed in sheltered workshops, or under 14(C), that were making sub-minimum wage. I wanted to change their title from trainee to employee, so that EEOC could then consider them employees, because probably they couldn't. That was my goal when I got there. I was going to end sheltered workshops, single handedly.

**Peter Blanck:**

You started the movement in that regard.

**Christine Griffin:**

Then when I got there, when you get there as commissioner, every head of every department comes and briefs you on what's going on. I remember the guy who headed up the federal side of the house coming in, and I said something like, "Well, the federal government's a good employer of people with disabilities, right?" He looked at me and he said, "Where did you get that idea?" I don't don't know why I thought that they were better than most.

**Christine Griffin:**

What I learned was they were terrible. I just sat there. I remember sitting at my conference table with my staff and saying, "Look, we shouldn't be telling private employers what to do until we get our own act together. We should figure this out. We should figure out how do we people into the workforce in a significant way and accommodate them and make sure everything's done the way it should be, according to the law. And then we can be the model employer for private employers." That's what started this whole effort, and we called it LEAD Leadership for Employment of Americans with Disabilities.

**Peter Blanck:**

On behalf of ADA Live! and our listing audience. If the listing audience has any questions for Chris or about this topic, please submit your questions online at [www.adalive.org](http://www.adalive.org), or call the Southeast ADA Center at 1-404-541-9001. Now, a word from this episode's sponsor.

**Commerical:**

Headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Bender Consulting Services Incorporated operates across the United States, and in Canada. Bender believes that all people with disability should have access to freedom, through competitive employment. Since 1995, Bender Consulting Services has been at the epicenter of disability diversity, equity and inclusion, growth and innovation.

Bender provides disability employment expertise in the areas of recruitment, workplace mentoring, strategic planning, training, and digital accessibility. Bender is a small business, a certified woman-owned business and a certified disability-owned business enterprise. To learn more, visit their website at [bender.consultcom](http://bender.consultcom).

**Peter Blanck:**

Welcome back. I have the delightful privilege of talking with Chris Griffin, who's the Senior Executive Search Consultant at Bender Consulting Services Inc. Probably among the premier disability-led and run organizations of its kind. We've been talking with Chris,

who's been in various positions and we were talking about your years at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Now, we're at the point where, while you're at the EEOC, the ADA Amendments Act has passed. Is that correct?

**Christine Griffin:**

Yes. Yeah.

**Peter Blanck:**

What finger did you have on that little initiative?

**Christine Griffin:**

That was very interesting. While we were sitting commissioners, we were not allowed to engage in discussions and the negotiation that were going on regarding this law. I was hearing from my friends and from people that were working on it. It was so exciting, Peter, I think you remember that. The fact that we were going to be able to fix the actual definition of disability that had been stripped away by the Supreme Court, we were going to be able to fix that was so exciting. It was palpable and gets passed and everyone's excited.

**Christine Griffin:**

Of course, prior to that, everyone was so afraid to even let this be opened up because they thought there'd be all these changes to the ADA that would be negative, when in fact that's not what happened, it was all positive, and it was just really a great restoration of what the intent of the law was.

**Peter Blanck:**

You probably worked with and saw many of those same people that you started out in 1990 at those training-

**Christine Griffin:**

Exactly. It just was great to get that done. But once it got done, then it was left to agencies to start writing the regulations. The regulations of what everyone uses to interpret what the law said. Again, we were under a different administration, there was a lot of pressure to right something that wasn't exactly what the intent of this law was.

**Christine Griffin:**

I remember having lot of discussions with people in the different departments at EEOC. What to write, how to write it. I spearheaded a group that was writing the regulations. I believed, at the time, that we should stop writing regulations that leave too much open to interpretation. I liked what the regulations for the Family Medical Leave Act, out in Department of Labor did, which gave examples of things within the regulations. I thought they were very well written and easy to follow. I wanted to make it difficult for some judge to interpret this the way he felt it should be. I wanted it to be interpreted the way the law was written and what the intent was by the people that wrote the ADA Amendments Act.

**Peter Blanck:**

When you went to OPM, were you doing very different things? Obviously, you wee in a different role.

**Christine Griffin:**

Yes. What happened was-

**Peter Blanck:**

What did you see as your main mission there? What was your main objective there?

**Christine Griffin:**

My main objective there was to actually... There were two things. One was to increase the hiring of people with disabilities in the federal government, and the other thing was to establish, for the first time ever, an office of diversity inclusion at OPM. Can you believe up until that point in time, there was no central diversity and inclusion office or direction

coming from the federal government. Every agency was left to their own devices. They either had an office and they addressed diversity and inclusion, or they didn't. Some didn't care, some cared a lot and did a great job.

**Christine Griffin:**

I remember NASA did a fabulous job on diversity and inclusion without anyone forcing them to do it. You learned that, and I learned this at the EEOC too, you got to know what agencies were very good and which ones weren't. My goal was to get over there and ultimately get executive orders signed by the president that would increase the employment of people with disabilities in the federal government, and that would embrace and anoint an office of diversity and inclusion that the other agencies would have to be accountable to at OPM. I did both of those.

**Peter Blanck:**

In the interest of time, and we could go on all day, I'm happy-

**Christine Griffin:**

Yeah, we could.

**Peter Blanck:**

... to have a conversation over coffee with my dear colleague. Let's skip a few years. We're in a pandemic. The employment rate hasn't really moved. If anything, it's different than it was with all the hybrid work and the telework and so forth questions of hiring and so forth. You're just appointed now, hypothetically in this Biden administration in a senior position, what are you going to do? What are you going to tell them?

**Christine Griffin:**

I'm going to look at the federal workforce and start really working again on telework. Telework for me is the silver lining in the COVID saga for our people with disabilities. I

really believe this is the first time that we realized everyone, almost everyone can work from home, not everyone, but almost everyone can. That includes people with disabilities.

**Christine Griffin:**

I would look at that. I would look at the federal workforce and then for the private sector, I would look at incentivizing private sector employers to hire people with disabilities. I would incentivize them by figuring out what made sense. But we spent a lot of money in this country on policy and studying of various aspects of employment of people with disabilities.

**Christine Griffin:**

I'd like to take a percentage of that money and actually use it to give to employers, to hire a person with a disability, bring them on board, let them telework as an accommodation, if that's what they need to do, and if that's what they can do for that particular job. Have some sort of an arrangement with the employee where after six months or a year of that person being great as an employee, satisfactory as an employee, whatever the standard is for all your employees, that you then hire them permanently and you keep them on board. I really believe that would be a great use of funding in this country, and it would speed up the process of hiring people with disabilities.

**Peter Blanck:**

Our Institute with Harvard and Rutgers was very fortunate to get two national centers. They're called research rehabilitation and training centers, basically on the future of employment policy and practice for people with disabilities. One of my colleagues, a really fine economist at Rutgers, Doug Kruse, just did a study for us. He found that, interestingly, although telework improved, working from home for everybody, people with the disabilities lagged overall, because there's a higher proportion of people with disabilities working in jobs that are not capable of telecommuting.

**Christine Griffin:**

Yeah.

**Peter Blanck:**

Like service jobs and so forth. We have to move backwards still a bit, even further towards, I guess, education and training and apprenticeship. Why hasn't that taken off, and we still have this lag? Does it even go back further really to inclusivity and educational programming?

**Christine Griffin:**

Well, I think to some degree it does, but I think we've done a pretty good job in this country on the education forefront of people with disabilities. I think where we really fail them is that after they finish, let's say high school, everything stops. We don't have internships for kids with disabilities. We don't have the practical opportunities that we provide for everybody else, that we expect to go into the workforce.

**Christine Griffin:**

Our expectations are so low of people with disabilities in this country, it's staggering. This is why people with disabilities aren't getting jobs. It's everything from their own parents and their own family saying, "You have a disability, you can't work." To their teachers saying it, to society saying it to them because when they try and get a job, we're not going to give you one.

**Christine Griffin:**

I think we've actually done a pretty good job at educating people, and we fail them when high school ends. Getting them to go on to college, I think we've done a great job of including people with disabilities in colleges and universities and Syracuse is a perfect example of that, in accommodating them and making sure that they get the education that they deserve, but also getting the education in the manner by which they can learn.

**Christine Griffin:**

I think we've done a good job of that, and yet they get out of college, and guess what? Again, that brick wall. It's terrible. Social security plays into this. This is another aspect

that we haven't really talked about, but things that come with benefits like healthcare, and people are afraid to give that up. If they go to work, they might be in a position where you don't make a great amount of money and now you've lost your access to healthcare. There's a lot of scary factors and things that happen in a young person's life as they get out of high school and they get out of college and they can't get a job.

**Peter Blanck:**

Well, Chris, I believe you, and certainly I tend to be optimists. I worry whether others will be having this same conversation, hopefully you and I won't. Five years from now, 10 years from now, [inaudible 00:35:02] going at a country at a time when we're dealing with disability, racial justice, immigration, job paradigm change. What's your final word about hopefully optimistic, where are we going, and what do we still need to do?

**Christine Griffin:**

I am optimistic. Again, I think we have to find a way to incentivize private employers, because I know for a fact that once people with disabilities get into the workforce and do the job that they were hired to do, people start looking at them differently than they did. That discrimination starts to disappear. I really think if we can figure that part out, how do we force private employers to hire more people with disabilities? Do we do it by incentivizing them? Do we do it by having some quota? These are all the things that other groups have faced already, to some degree.

**Christine Griffin:**

We're not there yet with people with disabilities. There's no Supreme Court cases saying you can't affirmative action for people with disabilities. While there isn't, I think we should use this opportunity to use affirmative action and incentivizing to get people into the workforce.

**Peter Blanck:**

Be careful what you wish for. Yesterday, as you know, the United States Supreme Court granted cert in the educational affirmative action cases. I

**Christine Griffin:**

I know. I see them starting to do away with, I hope they don't, but it seems like the indication is that they will. But that's why I think that we need to do something now to use those mechanisms to get people with disabilities into the workforce, before we are told you can't do that anymore either, because we've never been told that. No one's ever been told that.

**Christine Griffin:**

Like in the federal government, there's the schedule A program, there's certain things we can actually do, I think, to incentivize employers. It's everything from paying them. Outright, paying them, having the government pay them to hire more people with disabilities.

**Peter Blanck:**

Well, Chris, I'm going to vote for you when you run for Congress in Boston.

**Christine Griffin:**

Okay. All right. Great.

**Peter Blanck:**

For me, the mark of an amazing interview is just a seamless discussion with a friend that I learned, and I'm sure our listeners learned so much. If we don't have these conversations, so much is lost from generation to generation. But I so thank you for sharing your time with our wide audience and your insights in this area. It is an honor to speak with you. I know we'll speak again soon, and thank you on behalf of all of us, and I'd like to now please turn it back to Barry.

**Barry Whaley:**

Thank you, Peter. Christine, thank you. What a wonderful interview today. Thanks for sharing your time and your interests and your passion with us. Listeners, you can access

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**Barry Whaley:**

If you have questions about the ADA, you can use our online form anytime at [adalive.org](http://adalive.org), or contact your regional ADA center at 1-800-949-4232. Remember, those calls are always free, and they're confidential. ADA Live! is a program of the Southeast ADA Center and the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University in collaboration with the Disability Inclusive Employment Policy Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. Our producer is Celestia Ohrazda, with Beth Miller Harrison, Mary Morder, Emily Ruber, Marsha Schwanke and me, I'm Barry Whaley.

**Barry Whaley:**

Our music is from 4 Wheel City: The Movement 4 Improvement. As a reminder, you can also listen to our companion podcast, Disability Rights Today. Your source for in-depth discussion on important court cases that shape the Americans with Disabilities Act. You can learn more at [disabilityrightstoday.org](http://disabilityrightstoday.org). See you next episode.

**4 Wheel City:** (rapping)

[End of Transcript]

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