

April 17, 2024

Members of the House Commerce Committee

I am honored to have the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the significant benefits that hosting Project Search at University of Vermont Medical Center has brought to our organization over the past years. Project Search has been a transformative program for both our hospital and the young individuals who have participated in it. People with disabilities are consumers of healthcare, it is impactful to our patients to see people like themselves in our workforce. To date, 29 young adults have completed the program and 6 will finish in June.

First and foremost, hosting Project Search has allowed us to contribute to the community in a meaningful and impactful way. By providing internship opportunities to young adults with disabilities, we have been able to foster a more inclusive and diverse work environment within our hospital. This has not only benefited the interns themselves by providing them with valuable work experience and skills, but it has also enriched our organizational culture and demonstrated our commitment to equity.

Furthermore, our participation in Project Search has directly contributed to the development of a skilled and dedicated workforce. The interns who have joined us through this program have brought a fresh perspective, innovative ideas, enthusiasm, and a strong work ethic to our hospital. Some of them have gone on to secure employment within our organization or in other jobs outside of UVMHC, demonstrating the tangible impact of this program on their lives and the broader community. UVMHC has hired 4 former interns, and we are working hard to hire many more in years to come.

In addition, hosting Project Search has allowed us to build strong partnerships with local educational institutions, community organizations, and other agencies. These collaborations have not only strengthened our ties to the community but have also positioned us as a leader in promoting inclusive employment practices and supporting individuals with disabilities.

The financial benefits of participating in Project Search should not be overlooked as well. By investing in the professional development of these young individuals, we have seen a positive impact on employee morale, productivity, and overall organizational performance. This program has provided us with a pipeline of talented individuals who bring unique perspectives and skills to our workforce.

In conclusion, the benefits of hosting Project Search at our hospital have been far-reaching and impactful. By continuing to support this program, we are not only investing in the future of these young adults but also in the success and sustainability of our organization. I urge you to consider the significant value of Project Search and to continue your support for programs that promote diversity, inclusion, and the development of a skilled workforce in Vermont.

Thank you for your attention.

Rebecca (Becky) Kapsalis  
Network AVP, Talent Acquisition.  
Rebecca.Kapsalis@uvmhealth.org