



25th Annual U.S. Conference on DISABILITY
October 7th, 2026

25 Years of Progress: Honoring the Legacy of Edward R. Leahy, Jr.
Disability Inclusion and Careers
Transforming Barriers into Opportunities

**Presented by: The University of Scranton, Leahy College of Health Sciences and
The Edward R. Leahy, Jr., Endowment**

- 7:45 - 8:30 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 – 8:45 a.m. Opening Remarks
Rev. Joseph G. Marina, S.J., President, the University of Scranton
Victoria Castellanos, Ph.D., Dean, The Leahy College of Health Sciences
Edward R. and Patricia Leahy, Honorary Conference Co-Chairs
- 8:45 – 9:15 a.m. **The Honorable Robert P. Casey**, former U.S. Senator for Pennsylvania
Former U.S. Senator Bob Casey recently joined The University of Scranton as a Leahy Distinguished Fellow in Public Service, a role that has engaged the Scrantonian and three-term senator across several aspects of campus life. Drawing on his experience from 18 years in the Senate and a decade in statewide positions, he is mentoring students, advising on relevant initiatives and broadly contributing to University activities aligned with public service and leadership.
Born and raised in Scranton, Sen. Casey has dedicated his life to public service. He's won six statewide elections, serving as Pennsylvania's Auditor General for two terms (1997-2005) and State Treasurer for one term (2005-2007) before being elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006. He remained in office until 2024-25.
Over the course of his 18 years in the U.S. Senate, Sen. Casey earned a reputation as an effective legislator known for his ability to work across party lines and focus on practical solutions. He authored and passed 99 pieces of legislation into law, including the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, widely recognized as the most impactful piece of legislation for people with disabilities since the Americans with Disabilities Act. As chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and a longtime member of the Finance and HELP (Health, Education, Labor and Pension) Committees, Sen. Casey established himself as one of the leading advocates in Congress for children, workers, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- 9:15 – 10:15 a.m. **Mason Ameri, Ph.D.**
Dr. Mason Ameri specializes in disability employment and how Fortune 500 companies recruit, retain, and advance people with disabilities. Research, supported by \$16.3M+ in external grant funding, has been published in leading outlets, including Harvard Business Review and MIT Sloan Management Review, and featured in The New York Times, including selection for the "Best Live Conversations on Times Journalism." Partnered with organizations on disability access reform, such as Deutsche Bank, Accenture, Salesforce, NFL, HSBC, EY, Hershey, World Bank Group, TEDx, U.S. House of

Representatives, Department of Energy, Department of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, and Election Assistance Commission. Teaches Management Skills and Negotiations using simulations, case work, and applied exercises to connect theory with practice. Co-leads curriculum development across RBS and the Rutgers Honors College, including redesign of the Rutgers–New Brunswick Honors curriculum, launch of the Disability Studies minor, and contributions to Management Skills, Organizational Behavior, and Negotiations curricula. Recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching, the Provost’s Award for Excellence in Teaching Innovations, and recognition as one of Poets&Quants’s Best 40 Under 40 MBA Professors.

10:15– 10:45 a.m. Break & Networking

10:45-11:45 a.m. ***Kerry Magro, Ed.D.***

Dr. Kerry Magro (Mah-grow) Ed.D. was nonspeaking till 2.5, diagnosed with autism at 4 and didn’t speak in complete sentences until 7 years old. Today as an adult he is an award-winning autistic professional speaker, best-selling author and autism consultant to Netflix’s Emmy-Award Winning Series ‘Love on the Spectrum U.S’ and the HBO series Mrs. Fletcher. His work also includes being hired as a writer for the PBS Kids new series ‘Carl the Collector’ featuring the TV Network’s first-ever autistic main character. Kerry is CEO & President of KFM Making A Difference, a nonprofit organization that hosts inclusion events and has provided 150 scholarships for autistic students for college and counting since 2011. He’s provided 27 small business grants for small businesses that hire people with disabilities and has played Santa Claus for autistic and special needs children for the past decade to give them an opportunity to meet Santa in a sensory-friendly environment. Kerry’s best-selling books *Defining Autism From The Heart*, and *Autism and Falling in Love, I Will Light It Up Blue* and his latest, *Autistics on Autism, Supporting Your Autism Journey* and *Santa Goes The Extra Mile for Children with Disabilities* have reached Amazon Best-Seller Lists for Special Needs Parenting. In "*Supporting Your Autism Journey: Award-Winning Autistic Adult Answers Your Burning Questions*," Dr. Kerry Magro Ed.D. offers a deeply personal and insightful look into the autism spectrum, drawing from his own experiences as a nonspeaking individual with autism. This book emerges from Magro's desire to bridge the gap between the autistic community and a society that often misunderstands them, fueled by the countless inquiries he has received over the years. From parents and educators to first responders and corporations aiming to understand and support autistic individuals, Magro tackles the most pressing questions, including but not limited to ABA controversy, nonspeaking autism, employment, food aversions, special education, social skills, IEPs, the transition to adulthood, and a wealth of resources.

11:45 – 1:00 p.m. Lunch & Awards (Blessing)

1:00 – 2:30pm ***Kathy West Evans, MPA, CRC & John Evans***

Kathy West Evans is a Consultant and founder at Abilities United Consulting, working with businesses and organizations to develop strategies focused on building a talent pipeline, hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Prior to this new role, Kathy was the Director of Business Relations for the national organization of the 78 public VR agencies in every state, the territories and D.C. She has her Bachelor of Science and MA in Public Administration; she is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor

(CRC) who is fluent in American Sign Language. Kathy started in the field of rehabilitation in 1978 working at a community agency managing a Projects with Industry program, then for the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation as a VRC, Assistant Regional Administrator and Statewide Program Manager in Business Relations and Marketing. She moved from DVR to the federal level with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and now leads the National Employment Team (NET) at CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation). The NET is a cross state team of VR business specialists working through a dual customer approach to develop strategies with business (private, public, and non-profit) to employ and retain the talents of individuals with disabilities across the company or organization. Kathy is a past Chair of the Veterans Advisory Council on Rehabilitation and a former Commissioner on the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. In addition to impacting legislation focused on VR's work with business, she is a frequent speaker and has co-authored articles focused on working with business to employ the talents of individuals with disabilities.

John Evans John Evans is a Consultant and founder at Abilities United Consulting, working with businesses and organizations to develop strategies focused on building a talent pipeline, hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities in the workforce. retired from the State of Washington – Department Social Health Services – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, where he was the agency's statewide VR Program Administrator for Employer Relations. A 1983 graduate of Seattle University in Public Administration and Human Resource Development, John spent 31 years of public service in the fields of vocational rehabilitation; labor relations; human resource development; disability inclusion; and the employment of people with disabilities in the workplace. Born with profound congenital deafness, John is a former beneficiary of the public Vocational Rehabilitation system, first becoming a VR Counselor working with the deaf, hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind in 1984. John's career includes working in a community agency to develop a program to serve individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. At the State level John worked in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and at the WA State Department of Personnel. Serving as a Lead VR Counselor, Regional Business Relations Specialist, Affirmative Action Officer, SR Human Resource Consultant, Statewide Reasonable Accommodation Specialist, State Personnel ADA Manager, VR Unit Supervisor, and Program Administrator. John is uniquely positioned to offer insights into the dynamics and benefits of "disability employment and employer relations".

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Break & Networking

3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Rebecca Alexander, LCSW-R, MPH, RYT

Rebecca Alexander is an award-winning author, psychodynamic psychotherapist, keynote speaker, and disability rights advocate. Living with Usher syndrome, a rare genetic condition causing progressive vision and hearing loss, Rebecca combines more than two decades of clinical expertise with her lived experience to help organizations rethink resilience, leadership, accessibility, and navigating uncertainty. She has presented for organizations including Harvard Medical School, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Microsoft, Google, Johnson & Johnson, and Peloton, and is the author of *Not Fade Away: A Memoir of Senses Lost and Found*.

4:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks