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NEWS RELEASE

Florida Chamber Encourages Meaningful Employment Opportunities for the Disabled and Launches Unique Abilities Internship Program

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Jan. 6, 2016) – New research released today by the Florida Chamber Foundation shows a disproportionately high unemployment rate among Floridians with disabilities. As part of the Chamber Foundation’s Florida Scorecard Research Project, this first-of-its-kind research shows more than 700,000 individuals with disabilities are not in Florida’s workforce.

Florida Chamber Foundation Chief Economist Dr. Jerry D. Parrish provided an independent analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey to develop the research results and estimates. According to the report, entitled *Quantifying the Unemployment Rate for Workers with Disabilities in Florida*, there are:

- More than 1.13 million Floridians with disabilities between 16 and 65, and
- Of those, 62.9 percent or more than 700,000 are currently not employed and may want to be part of Florida’s workforce.

The results of the report show that not only is the unemployment rate for Floridians with unique abilities substantially higher than the overall unemployment rate, but also the variability of the rates across counties is extremely high. While the annual average unemployment rate for 2014 was 6.3 percent, the unemployment rate for Floridians with disabilities in the 40 most-populated counties was 18.1 percent.

According to Dr. Susanne Homant, President and CEO of The Able Trust, this groundbreaking data has been a missing piece of important information in measuring progress among Floridians with disabilities.

“Part of the successful growth of Florida’s economy is access to all the talent in Florida and in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce,” Dr. Homant said. “The Chamber Foundation Scorecard Research Project will provide employment data and measure success.”

As a result of the significant disparity in the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities, the Florida Chamber Foundation is taking action by working with partners, including The Able Trust and local Chambers, to launch an internship program that assists Floridians with disabilities in finding meaningful employment opportunities.

“The Florida Chamber wants to do its part to encourage businesses across Florida to create job opportunities for individuals with unique abilities, and we’re pleased to help jumpstart this movement by partnering on the unique abilities internship program,” said Mark Wilson, President and CEO of the Florida Chamber Foundation.

The research provided for this report is the first in a series of reports conducted for the Florida Scorecard in an ongoing effort to provide metrics that track Florida’s progress and prepare the state for a more competitive future. The data provided in this report will offer Florida policymakers a new tool to help quantify the amount of progress Florida makes over the next several years in utilizing Floridians with disabilities in our workforce.

“With an additional six million more residents expected by 2030 and two million more jobs to fill, it will be critical to help every Floridian that wants to work find a job,” said Tony Carvajal, Executive Vice President of the Florida Chamber Foundation.

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The Florida Chamber Foundation is the business-led, solutions development and research organization working in partnership with state business leaders to secure Florida’s future. The Foundation’s “Six Pillars” serve as a visioning platform for developing the first-ever, long-term strategic plan for the state. The Foundation’s work focuses on: 1) Talent Supply and Education, 2) Innovation and Economic Development, 3) Infrastructure and Growth Leadership, 4) Business Climate and Competitiveness, 5) Civic and Governance Systems, and 6) Quality of Life and Quality Places. Founded in 1968, the Foundation is a crucial voice for improving the state's pro-business climate to enable Florida to grow and prosper. Visit www.FLFoundation.org for more information.

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