

BRIEFING ROOM

President Biden Appoints Members to U.S. AbilityOne Commission

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WASHINGTON – Today, President Biden announced that he has appointed the following individuals to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission, which administers the AbilityOne Program, one of the nation’s largest sources of employment for people who are blind or have significant disabilities:

- Bryan Bashin, Appointee for Commissioner
- Christina Brandt, Appointee for Commissioner
- Gabriel M. Cazares, Appointee for Commissioner
- Chai Rachel Feldblum, Appointee for Commissioner

Bryan Bashin, Commissioner

Bryan Bashin is CEO of the Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually-Impaired in San Francisco, a 119-year-old nonprofit devoted to the comprehensive training and employment of blind people. For 30 years his organization has employed blind workers through the National Industries for the Blind, one of the central non-profits in the AbilityOne program. Over the last 11 years, Bashin has overseen significant expansions of direct blind employment in the AbilityOne space, but most importantly in competitive, integrated workplaces. Bashin previously worked as an Assistant Regional Commissioner for the Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) where he supervised \$400 million in federal disability spending in Arizona, Nevada, California, Hawaii, and Pacific territories. From 1998 until 2004, Bashin was Executive Director of the Sacramento Society for the Blind, where he led a strong expansion of blindness services, including competitive employment programs. Bashin has also been an expert witness in cases involving employment of people with disabilities. A former science journalist, Bashin is well acquainted with industrial and technical processes and skill needs of employers. Bashin is currently a Board member of VisionServe Alliance, a membership association of more than 100 U.S. blindness agencies.

Christina Brandt, Commissioner

Christina Brandt is the CEO of an innovative nonprofit, an AbilityOne producer with over four decades of quality service to the government customer. She transformed AtWork! from a sheltered workshop paying subminimum wages to a nationally recognized best-practice provider of customized and integrated community employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a subject matter expert, Christina has delivered training and technical assistance in multiple states, including significant work in Oregon implementing the settlement of *Lane vs. Brown*. Throughout her 46-year career she has advanced equity and inclusion for people with disabilities and was instrumental in securing Washington State's Employment First legislation.

Gabe Cazares, Commissioner

Gabe Cazares currently serves as the Director of Mayor Sylvester Turner's Office for People with Disabilities in the City of Houston, Texas. In this capacity, Gabe oversees the accessible and timely delivery of city services, programs, and activities for over 215,000 Houstonians with disabilities. Prior to his appointment, he served as the Manager of Government Affairs at the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore, Maryland. There he managed the organization's education, technology, immigrants' rights, LGBTQ, and blind entrepreneur small business policy portfolio. Gabe holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a Spanish minor from Texas State University. He and his partner, Derin Dacey, live in Houston with their 4-year-old rescue dog, Sam.

Chai Feldblum, Commissioner

Chai Feldblum is a national expert in disability law and employment. She led the drafting and negotiating of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. As a law professor at Georgetown University Law Center, she and her students represented non-profit organizations, including disability rights organizations, in advocating for legislation and administrative regulations to support social justice goals. Chai served as a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission during the Obama-Biden Administration, where she spearheaded the issuance of regulations under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Those regulations established a goal of 12% representation in the federal workforce of people with all disabilities and a 2% representation of people with significant disabilities. The latter group includes people with the type of disabilities hired under the AbilityOne program. Chai is a lesbian and has a psychiatric disability of anxiety disorder.

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