

Statement for the Record

U.S. House of Representatives
House Small Business Committee
Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Workforce Development

**“Pathways to Success: Supporting Entrepreneurs and Employees with Disabilities”
Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) and the CTA Foundation, believe strongly in the power of technology to enhance lives. This holds true for all people but is particularly important for often underserved populations, including older adults and people with disabilities. We applaud the Subcommittee on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development for hosting the “Pathways to Success: Supporting Entrepreneurs and Employees with Disabilities” hearing.

The Consumer Technology Association, currently celebrating its 100th anniversary, has invested heavily in advancing the technologies that enable diversity in the workforce. Programs include apprenticeship programs, working with Veteran organizations, and investing in companies with diverse founders. But no investment better fits with the theme of this hearing than the creation of the CTA Foundation twelve years ago. The Foundation’s mission is to link older adults and people with disabilities with technologies that enhance their lives. They do it through a variety of programs based around three core activities:

- **Convening:** Bringing together leaders from across industry, advocacy groups, nonprofit service organizations, government, academia, and other key stakeholders.
- **Innovation:** Recognizing technologies that advance the foundation's mission through award programs and serving to attract the attention of more companies to address this space. Examples include the [Eureka Park Accessibility Contest](#) and the [Pitch Competition](#).
- **Funding:** Providing grant funding to nonprofit organizations using technologies to assist older adults and people with disabilities.

During [CES 2024](#), we saw how CES is a leading showcase for accessibility, and technology improving the lives of people of all ages and abilities.

CTA and the CTA Foundation brought leaders from disability organizations, including the American Council of the Blind, Aspiritech, the Hearing Loss Association of America, MS Alliance Foundation, National Black Deaf Advocates, National Association of the Deaf, TDI, Teach Access, the Wireless RERC and World Institute on Disability, to tour the show floor, meet with exhibitors and provide feedback representing their communities with the companies they met. Those leaders are just the tip of the iceberg of representatives at the show. There was also the [Accessibility Roundtable](#), held at the start of the show. This year, the program brought more than 85 representatives together from across industry and disability organizations to discuss a range of issues, including the opportunity and challenges of AI for the disability community and ways companies are addressing accommodations in hybrid work environments.

CES also featured many [sessions](#) focused on these topics, including fireside chats with leaders at companies like Intel, MITRE and Ricoh. Keynote sessions from L’Oreal, Walmart and others touched on accessibility. CES 2024 featured panel discussions on inclusive design, accessible gaming, assistive technology trends, OTC hearing aids and neurodivergent employees. The CTA Foundation also held its [6th pitch competition](#), this year with a focus on health tech for older adults and people with disabilities. This standing-room-only event gave eight startups from around the world the opportunity to present on stage at CES, and the grand prize winner, Augmental from California, and audience choice winner, Proxie Health from New York, represent just two of the hundreds of companies touching on accessibility across the show. All these sessions and more will be available soon on [CES.tech](#).

Beyond CES, CTA has a long history of engagement with accessibility policy. CTA was instrumental in the development of the legislation that allowed [over-the-counter hearing aids](#) to come to market. CTA was also a leading member of the [Hearing Aid Compatibility Task Force](#) and continues to serve on the Federal Communications Commission’s [Disability Advisory Committee](#). In addition, CTA is an ANSI-accredited [standards development organization](#) and led the development of closed-captioning standards for television.

Following CES, the CTA Foundation is now working with nonprofit organizations from across the country on 2024 grant funding. We look forward to seeing organizations addressing employment, such as [previous grant recipients](#) the Arc, BridgingApps, Byte Back, Hearing Loss Association of America, the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the United Spinal Association, and many more.

Please consider CTA a resource on topics having to do with accessibility. We appreciate the Subcommittee’s focus on this, and we look forward to working with you as you proceed on this critical issue.