Customize this letter to your purpose - it could be a letter to your Member of Provincial Parliament, Member of Parliament, city council, local workforce development initiative, family network, etc.

YOUR NAME

Your Address

Your email/phone

DATE

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss an important equity and access issue with you. [customize to your ask]

Young people with disabilities often finish high school with limited or no work experience. This makes it very difficult for them to find employment.1 The latest Statistics Canada data shows a gap of at least 16% in the employment rate of individuals with disabilities (closer to 50% for those with more significant disabilities).2

One of the major reasons it is so hard for youth to get work experience is that there is no public funding for “start early” employment training programs or employment support services while youth are in school.3,4

We know that supported employment services are effective in connecting individuals with disabilities to the workforce and employers to vital human resources.5,6 Why are these services only available when youth with disabilities graduate? By that milestone, they are years behind peers and experience long-term “career scarring” and impacts to overall health and wellbeing.7

Our community has [or wants to start] a highly effective “start early” employment training program called [Project SEARCH](http://www.projectsearchcanada.org). Our program is at risk [cannot start] because of the public funding gap.

A recent study showed that with a small public investment of $16-17,000 per person for “start early” employment programming, government would realize a 600% return ($127,000+) per person.3,4

Employment is a social determinant of health and a human right.8,9 We need to find a way to get young people with disabilities the support they need to get the best start in life. This may require collaboration between education, labour, children’s services and health.

I look forward to discussing what our community can do to raise awareness of this important issue.

Signature

Endnotes:

1 Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W.-H., Fowler, C. H., Poppen, M., Sinclair, J., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 44(1), 47-64.

2 Accessibility in Canada: Results from the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (2024-05-28). Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240528/dq240528b-eng.htm>

3 Bowman, L. R., McDougall, C., Doucet, R., Pooran, B., Xu, Y., & Campbell, J. (2024). Funding employment inclusion for Ontario youth with disabilities: a theoretical cost-benefit model. Frontiers in Sociology, 9, 1281088.

4 Bowman, L. R., McDougall, C., Doucet, R., Pooran, B., & Campbell, J. (2024). Funding Employment Inclusion for Ontario Youth with Disabilities: A Cost-Benefit Model Update. <https://hollandbloorview.ca/sites/default/files/2024-09/Funding-Employment-Inclusion-2024_0.pdf>

5 Jetha, A., Shamaee, A., Tompa, E., Smith, P., Bültmann, U., Bonaccio, S., Tucker, L. B., Norman, C., Banks, C. G., & Gignac, M. A. (2023). The future of work in shaping the employment inclusion of young adults with disabilities: a qualitative study. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 42(9), 75-91.

6 Canadian Association for Supported Employment. (n.d.) About Supported Employment. Retrieved from <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/about/about-supported-employment/>

7  Krahn, H., & Chow, A. (2016). Youth unemployment and career scarring: Social-psychological mediating effects? Canadian Journal of Sociology, 41(2), 117-138.

8  Nations, U. (2006). Convention on the Rights Persons with Disabilities. Geneva Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>

9 Government of Canada. (2024). Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030/economic-growth.html>