

**TESTIMONY**

**BY**

**FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

**JACQUELINE MALLON**

**NEW YORK CITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES**

**BEFORE**

**THE COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**AND OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS**

**OF THE**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairs Farías and Brewer and members of the Committees on Economic Development and Oversight and Investigations. My name is Jackie Mallon and I am the First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (“SBS”). From SBS I am joined by Deputy Commissioner Lucinda Glover and from the New York City Economic Development Corporation (“EDC”), Executive Vice President for Initiatives, Faye Penn. I am pleased to testify today on the City’s workforce development programs through the pandemic and on its plans for the future.

At SBS, we aim to unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting them to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building vibrant neighborhoods across the five boroughs. SBS’ Workforce Development Division (“WDD”) is focused on delivering equitable and quality employment and training services leading to economic self-sufficiency and mobility for New York City's diverse communities. We work with industry partners to identify and develop high-quality training, delivered directly to job seekers, so that they can build the

skills needed for in-demand jobs. The Division also supports businesses in NYC by offering training opportunities for new and current employees and by sourcing candidates for job openings. SBS operates 18 Workforce1 Career Centers across the city connecting jobseekers with employment opportunities, providing industry-informed trainings, and offering a variety of candidate development services, such as resume development, interview preparation, and job search workshops.

From the outset of the pandemic, SBS immediately adapted the Workforce1 Career Center services and training programs to an online model. Our Virtual Workforce1 Career Center System was launched less than two weeks after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in New York City. Like many agencies SBS had to shift its work to fight the pandemic directly. Efforts focused on connecting workers to fill critical staffing needs in nursing homes, community hospitals and other essential service providers like grocery stores. SBS also led recruitment and training for the Vaccine for All Corps, which connected and employed people in their neighborhoods to help the vaccination effort on a local level. And we launched the Resource Navigator Training program to train the NYC Test and Trace Corps.

As non-essential businesses were forced to shutter, many New Yorkers found themselves without jobs either temporarily or long-term. When businesses started re-opening and hiring additional staff, SBS hosted and participated in virtual hiring events and delivered career guidance and interview prep support to job seekers. We also launched the Career Discovery program to help jobseekers explore options and get free training in new fields. With Hospitality Hire SBS connected workers to the hospitality industry when challenges arose from worker shortages. And SBS began a 28-week immersive training program called Future Code, for New Yorkers with no previous professional web development experience, to help them enter a career in tech.

Overall, during the pandemic SBS served over 130,000 people, connected 34,000 people to jobs, and trained over 11,000 New Yorkers, giving them new skills to advance their careers.

As we enter a new phase of the pandemic, SBS continues to pivot toward the future and part of that pivot means keeping what worked. Our virtual workforce centers are now preferred by many of our jobseekers, giving them more flexibility to meet their needs. These new virtual services will be a core part of our work going forward. And just over a week ago, the Mayor laid out a bold plan to return the City to pre-pandemic employment

levels with a focus on equity and inclusivity to provide opportunity to every New Yorker. “Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent: A Blueprint for New York City’s Economic Recovery” lays out five pillars, with more than 70 concrete initiatives, to create opportunities, connect New Yorkers seeking work, and help speed the recovery.

Some key workforce items from the plan in SBS’ portfolio include:

- Expanding our pilot program that offers modest **stipends** to low-income and traditionally underserved participants in select occupational training,
- Partnering with employers in the **tech sector** to meet their growing workforce needs with local diverse talent,
- Upskilling New Yorkers for in-demand roles in the **healthcare sector**, including our Nurse Residency program and our programs that help foreign-trained nurses achieve New York State credentials, and
- Bringing financial empowerment **Mobile Units** to neighborhoods across the five boroughs, offering on-site assistance including free tax prep, financial counseling, and job training enrollment.

And some of the items in EDC’s portfolio include:

- Expanding EDC’s **business development office**, which serves as a single point of contact to City government and helps

businesses grow and prosper—this office has already created or retained about 3,700 jobs since its launch in January 2020.

- Doubling down on **life sciences initiative**, with a \$1 billion dollar investment to magnify NYC's impact on the global life sciences community, bringing more life science businesses to NYC, and ensuring that NYC's growth benefits local New Yorkers.
- Jumpstarting a local **green economy, leading with offshore wind** and building out EDC's work at South Brooklyn Marine Terminal, which will bring 13,000 jobs
- Working with local designs and manufacturing to develop an **Open Restaurants kit-of-parts**—to drive local manufacturing and ease the transition for small restaurants to the permanent outdoor dining program
- Working with the **tech industry** on diversity in the sector and tech-for-good,
- Supporting and diversifying the **film and creative sectors**, including through their work at the Made in New York campus at Bush Terminal with a 500,000 square foot film production studio plus workforce commitments by Steiner Studios and with a new 221,000 square foot garment manufacturing hub, and
- Expanding business outreach and upgrading business technology with **the Small Business Resource Network**, which has already engaged with 27,700 businesses and built 243 websites.

At SBS and EDC, we are committed to fulfilling Mayor Adams' clear and bold agenda, to ensure the city's future economy is built on equity and inclusivity. We know that working closely with the City Council is critical to achieving this shared goal. Together, we can rebuild, renew, and reinvent NYC. I look forward to our continued partnership and thank you for your time today. We welcome any questions you may have.



## **PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF WATERFRONT ALLIANCE**

**March 21, 2022**

**New York City Council Hearing Committee on Economic Development  
Re: The Role of Climate Resilience and Maritime in the City's Workforce  
Development Plans**

**Submitted by Karen Imas, Vice President of Programs, Waterfront Alliance**

Thank you, Chair Farias and Council Members. I am Karen Imas, Vice President of Programs of the Waterfront Alliance, an alliance of more than 1,100 organizations, businesses, and individuals. We also convene the Rise to Resilience Coalition - a coalition of more than 100 organizations calling on government to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

We look forward to working with this Council and the new administration to ensure that New York Harbor and the waterfront are central to the economic recovery and wellbeing of New Yorkers. We are heartened to see the new economic development blueprint acknowledges the role that climate resilient infrastructure and offshore wind can play to generate new pathways of opportunity for New Yorkers and to grow new sectors of employment.

The following additional recommendations will help ensure that New York's 520 miles of waterfront are committed to resiliency, equity, recreation and opportunity for all New Yorkers.

First, we are pleased to see offshore wind highlighted so prominently in the City's new blueprint and encouraged by recent investments that position South Brooklyn Marine Terminal as a major regional offshore wind hub. The City's workforce development strategies should prioritize offshore wind training programs and the educational infrastructure needed to establish a New York City skilled workforce that can support this emerging industry. New York City is home to extraordinary educational institutions that are positioned to train this workforce, but they will need additional incentives, resources, partnerships, and technology to create these pathways of opportunity. This means starting with schools teaching younger students such as vocational high schools including the Harbor School, and up through higher education institutions like LaGuardia Community College, Kingsborough Community College, and SUNY Maritime. These homegrown institutions have the potential to create the next generation of





researchers, scientists, engineers, as well as trade workers, logistics experts, and transportation workers that are critical to offshore wind growth.

Next, we urge this Council and the administration to consider the maritime sector more broadly - beyond offshore wind - as a workforce driver. The wide range of activities directly involving cargo and passenger movements through the region's port include physical activities, information and financial flows, and transportation such as truck drivers, and supply chain logistics.

According to the New York Shipping Association, in New York City, the port industry supported in 2019: ([https://nysanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020\\_NYSA\\_Economic\\_Impact.pdf](https://nysanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020_NYSA_Economic_Impact.pdf))

- Nearly 17,000 direct jobs
- 44,800 total jobs in the city
- More than \$4.9 billion in personal income
- \$14.2 billion in business activity
- \$1.65 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues, with local and state tax revenues of nearly \$720 million and federal tax revenues of over \$930 million

The maritime sector is rapidly evolving and changing with growing interest in ferry transit, cleaner vessels, and moving goods on the water. BlueTech is the advanced technology sector of the maritime industry, which drives sustainable innovation across emerging markets of the "Blue Economy." It includes a broad spectrum of industries and innovative technologies focused on promoting sustainable ocean activities and the maritime sector.

Much like NYCEDC has invested in strategies for various tech clusters - fintech, biotech, proptech to name a few, we encourage the same level of attention to the BlueTech sector through partnerships, incubators, and start-up competitions.

We'd like to call out the north shore of Staten Island specifically in this regard as there have been local efforts for a Maritime Education & Recreation Corridor as a driver of jobs, tourism and recreation. Local economic development planning efforts such as this one are particularly



relevant as the community has put thought and effort into a vision that they believe will have a meaningful impact on the local economy and community.

Finally, we commend the administration for acknowledging coastal resilience projects in the economic development plan. Infrastructure jobs focused on coastal and climate resilience projects are on the rise – from landscape architecture to coastal engineering to building retrofits. We can do more to lift up this City’s working families through bold climate adaptation investments and put people to work as part of the City’s post-Covid recovery. Investing in resilience is not only a wise jobs strategy, but also a means of reducing future hazard mitigation costs in City budgets.

The recently released New York Comprehensive Waterfront Plan for example calls for investment in the green economy to include historically excluded communities in the jobs it provides. The City can help generate economic opportunity for New Yorkers by expanding access to well-paying jobs as part of its climate mitigation strategies. These strategies include transforming how energy is produced and distributed in NYC, retrofitting buildings to be more efficient, and promoting greener forms of production and distribution.

Finally, it is also critical the City unlock the opportunity for sound redevelopment of its most valued privately held waterfront by addressing the major bottlenecks in the waterfront permitting system administered by the state, City and federal government. The Waterfront Alliance looks forward to partnering with the City to address waterfront permitting reform. When climate resilient, community responsive and ecologically sound waterfront projects are prevented or slowed from redevelopment because of permitting roadblocks, the City loses opportunities to revitalize neighborhoods, improve the management of waterfront infrastructure, preserve or improve the tax base, and provide opportunities for comprehensive climate resilient planning across stretches of waterfront owned by multiple private landowners. Permitting processes relevant to these projects, the regulations that govern waterfront and waterways, and a lack of consistent permitting decisions must be addressed. In addition, improving these processes helps to get shovel ready projects off the ground more efficiently and get people to work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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**Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice**

*Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY23*

*Committee on Economic Development (Jointly with Committee on Oversight and Investigations)*

*The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic*

**March 21 , 2022**

Good morning, my name is Prarthana Gurung and I am the Director of Campaigns and Communications at Adhikaar. Adhikaar, meaning “rights” in Nepali, is a women-led community and workers’ center that provides direct services to the Nepali-speaking community and organizes low-income workers and impacted community members to promote social justice and human rights.

We are often referred to as our community’s 911 and 311 line, serving more than 10,000 Nepali-speaking people a year. Our community is one of the newer immigrant communities and one of the fastest growing Asian ethnic groups. Most of our members are women and work in the informal sector as nail salon workers, domestic workers, taxi drivers, and restaurant workers. Many live in Jackson Heights, Woodside, East Elmhurst, Elmhurst, Corona, Maspeth, Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Jamaica and Flatbush.

Our members become familiar with Adhikaar through our workforce development trainings, English for Empowerment classes, or stop by our community center to obtain support for their workers’ rights, immigration, or health issues. Through these programs we create access to information, build community leadership, and grow collective power to win rights for our communities, and dignity and equity for all. We submit this testimony to uplift the voices and demands of our community in advancing immigration justice, workers’ rights and a just and inclusive COVID-19 recovery.

We are currently pushing for comprehensive immigration reform at federal, state, and local levels, and are increasingly seen as a thought and action leader on immigrant rights on behalf of the hard-to-reach Nepali-speaking community in New York, and across the country. Since 2015, we have been the only organization in the country providing TPS related-support to the Nepali community through a mix of town halls, KYR events, legal clinics and one-on-one support to limited literacy TPS holders. An estimated 1,500 TPS holders are supported every year, with a majority living in NYC. As the Nepali-speaking community continues to grow in the City, these services are becoming increasingly essential to our members and help inform our programming and community needs assessment tools.

A central facet of our immigration work involves the provision of culturally competent case support to our at-risk members, particularly at the intersection of immigration and

workers rights. In 2021, our team accompanied 168 members on cases related to labor trafficking, immigration bonds, ICE case support, general immigration, fraud, and wage; a process that involves one-on-one case management, interpretation, and community support. We work alongside various legal service providers like TakeRoots Justice, Legal Aid Society, and City Bar to provide pro-bono legal support for our members.

Deeply linked to immigration justice is also advancing the literacy and leadership of our members. For the past 16 years, we have provided volunteer-based adult literacy classes to approximately 2,000 community members at our center in Woodside. The majority of our members have low literacy and English proficiency. Through our adult literacy programs our members are able to read, write, and speak the truth of their lived experience, build understanding and solidarity across differences, and examine historical and current systems of oppression and envision alternatives.

In 2021, we joined the Adult Literacy Pilot Project Initiative led by Literacy Assistance Center and Department of Youth and Community Development, and for the first time received funding for our adult literacy program. With dedicated funding, we have rolled out an integrated English For Empowerment (EFE) plan that offers industry specific English classes for nail salon workers and domestic workers, enhances the digital literacy of members, and ensures we're providing our members with practical knowledge to navigate their day-to-day lives. We sincerely hope that the Council is considering sustaining this project as it is crucial for our members.

Additionally, two years ago we were in the epicenter of the first wave of the pandemic. Thousands of community members reached out to Adhikaar seeking support. To meet their urgent demands we quickly transitioned our operations remotely and ran a robust COVID-19 community response that supported more than 10,000 Nepali-speaking immigrants through direct services and mutual aid, community education, organizing, and advocacy. We also invested deeply in the digital literacy of our members to empower their accessibility and engagement with online communication tools and platforms. This enabled the continuation of workforce development trainings for our nail salon and domestic worker members to ensure they have the tools and resources to thrive in their places of work. Despite these holistic efforts, the impacts of the pandemic continue to reverberate across our community. Our members face significant economic, health, and food insecurity, with a 2021 report by the Asian American Federation finding that more than a fifth of the Nepali-speaking community in the New York Metro area live below the poverty line.

This a snapshot of our multi-sectoral approach to advancing the rights of the Nepali-speaking community through services, advocacy and organizing. To meet the demands of our growing community we request funding from FY23 Discretionary budget – specifically \$50,000 from CM Krishnan, \$25,000 from CM Won and CM Caban, \$10,000 from CM Moya, \$80,000 from AAPI Community Support Initiative,



\$150,000 from Adult Literacy Initiative and \$75,000 for the NYC Care Coalition - New Initiative. We look forward to partnering with the City Council to ensure that our growing community not only survives, but thrives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEES ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT &  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT/INVESTIGATIONS

MARCO DAMIANI

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AHRC NEW YORK CITY

MEMBER, NEW YORK CITY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING COALITION, INAUGURAL POLICY COUNCIL  
MARCH 21, 2022

Good afternoon. I am Marco Damiani, CEO of AHRC New York City. AHRC NYC is the largest nonprofit in New York State providing services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Employing nearly 5,000 staff throughout New York City and founded in 1949, our mission is to empower people who are neurodiverse to lead full and equitable lives. Our vision is a socially just world where the power of difference is embraced, valued, and celebrated. Supporting over 15,000 children and adults on an annual basis, one of our core activities is to enable neurodiverse people to be actively included and engaged in society, and in competitive employment wherever possible.

Partnering with corporations such as Salesforce, Etsy and RXR, and government entities such as the MTA, DYCD, NYC DSS and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, we have helped thousands of people with disabilities become gainfully employed. Our major focus has been to assist NYC youth while working very closely with the NYC DYCD (Dept. of Youth and Community Development). We have been under contract with DYCD for over 30 years, and currently hold 4 different contracts assisting over 300 people on an annual basis. Funding for these programs is not sufficient and should be increased by 20% to improve overall quality and attract and maintain workforce. Recruiting of students for all programs is a major challenge due to COVID and other workforce dynamics.

There have been countless challenges and pain points faced during the pandemic, exacerbated by the following conditions:

- Funding across 21 agencies
- Lack of flexibility
- Difficulty with data and metrics
- Underfunding
- Difficulty in partnering and collaborating to provide most effective and holistic services
- Long-term consequences of the above, including significant funding shortfalls to our organization and to community of people with disabilities

Despite persistent employment barriers and low access to economic opportunities among New Yorkers, the workforce ecosystem has been woefully underfunded and under supported for decades. This especially impacts those from communities that have been historically

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MEMBER, NEW YORK CITY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING COALITION, INAUGURAL POLICY COUNCIL  
MARCH 21, 2022

marginalized and disinvested and has been exacerbated by the pandemic, budget cuts, and decreases in fundraising. All the while, this is paralleled by an increased need and demand for workforce services from both New Yorkers and employers, especially small businesses. We have all faced an increased difficulty in delivering services due to new digital infrastructure and curriculum needs, as well as the major need to upgrade and build new programs reflective of the sectors that are strong in the COVID economy and their new skill needs.

\$600 million dollars has been dedicated to workforce development. These funds must be used effectively and targeted in ways that produce long-term sustainable results. \$250M for COVID reemployment programs is an essential investment to ensure progress in vital workforce initiatives

As a field, we have been ready and eager to collaborate with City government for a long time but have not always been met with equal action and engagement from the City. Moving forward, we are looking for tangible new investments, implementation plans, and an equal seat at the table.

I also want to share that for the past 3 and a half years, AHRC NYC has had an incredibly successful public/private partnership with the NYC Department of Social Services, piloting an inclusive internship program. Funded by a Foundation for 3 years with an additional year to explore expanding the program to other NYC government agencies, we have successfully placed over 100 interns with a wide range of disabilities in placements throughout the Human Resources Administration and The Department of Homeless Services.

Over 30 of these interns are now employed, 17 in City Government. This model works - and we have a Manual prepared to guide other City Agencies in accomplishing this goal. This program is a powerful proof of concept and is readily replicable and scalable throughout New York City government and beyond. These are the kind of creative partnerships that are good for Government and good for people with disabilities. I encourage the Council to continue to work with our community to expand on initiatives like this one.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the committee today.

22 March, 2022

**General:**

Good afternoon, my name is Teresa Macchio, Director of Partnerships for the **American Management Association**. The American Management Association International (AMA) is a nearly 100 year-old non-profit leader in talent development, based in New York City. [www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org)

**Challenges:**

Covid has caused major disruption in the workforce, such as people taking retirement, re-evaluating their career goals as well as those who have left the workforce due to health concerns or lack of child care or parental care. Companies needed to be agile to adjust to pandemic challenges as they struggled with staff recruitment and retention, training, and employee engagement, and most importantly, servicing their customers.

Organizations are looking at how they can continue to sustain and grow their business, maintain their competitive position, and ensure an equitable and diverse work environment in a post pandemic world.

AMA would like to be part of NYC's Workforce Development recovery, but currently, members work in siloes and there is no one system and no accountability or tracking of metrics. For example, workers who complete career courses in I.T. and health care would benefit greatly from the "soft skills" that AMA offers to round out their competencies and provide management, communication, project management, and leadership skills, but they are not connected in a system.

AMA receives no funding from NYC. Our courses are typically paid for by the employer or they are self-funded. If there was budget for funding of these crucial skills for success, it would provide better outcomes for a future workforce. Employers could also be encouraged or even mandated to maintain a budget specifically for re-skilling and up-skilling of new and existing employees.

**Impact:**

Since March of 2020, AMA pivoted to remote training and provided impactful professional development for more than 1,500 New Yorkers, and more than 25,000 employees across the country. In the last decade alone, AMA has



trained 10 million people to do their jobs better and to align with company goals.

**Solutions:**

AMA supports NYCETC's recommendation of a \$250 million Covid reemployment program with subsidized employment and employer engagement. These funds will help employers pay for AMA's 160+ courses that help individuals and organizations transition to a post-pandemic world by re-skilling and up-skilling the workforce in the areas of Leadership, Managerial Skills, Women's Leadership, Communication, Project Management, Finance, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Critical Thinking to motivate and direct reports and teams. These crucial skills are both necessary and transferable across all sectors in the Mayor's Plan for recovery: Tech, Life Sciences and Healthcare, Industrial and Manufacturing, Creative and Cultural, and Jobs for the Future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at yesterday's hearing.

For more information, please contact:

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212.903.8547 or

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Read relevant information here:

[AMA Re-Engage and Retain Today's Workforce](#)



# Meeting Critical Employee Needs to Re-Engage and Retain Today's Workforce

**AMA** | **GLOBAL**<sup>™</sup>  
American Management Association

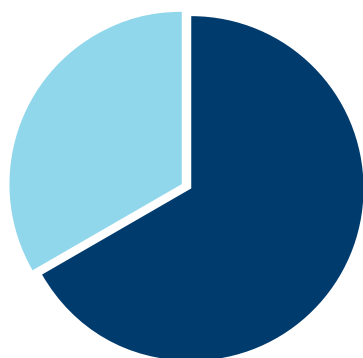
[www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org)

For many people and organizations, the pandemic's disruption was an awakening. The convergence of a tight job market, rapidly advancing digital communication and automation, and the emergency measures stemming from Covid-19 prompted employees at all levels to increasingly reevaluate their relationship with work. Many now place greater priority on mental health, work-life balance, and job satisfaction over job security. As a result, leaders are grappling with unprecedented and consequential questions about the future of their workplace, each with important implications for engaging and retaining their workforce.

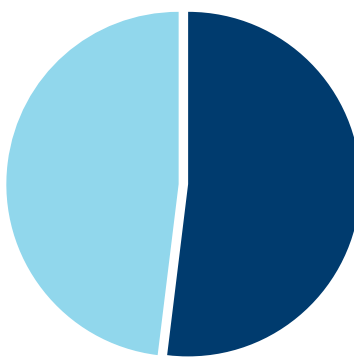
A globally recognized leader in professional development, American Management Association (AMA) understands the importance of sustaining employee engagement in *any* work environment—whether on-site in a physical office, completely remote and virtual, or some combination of the two. In October of 2021, AMA surveyed members and seminar respondents nationwide about their level of engagement with work and the impact of recent changes they have experienced.

## Increased Productivity Doesn't Necessarily Mean Your People Are More Motivated

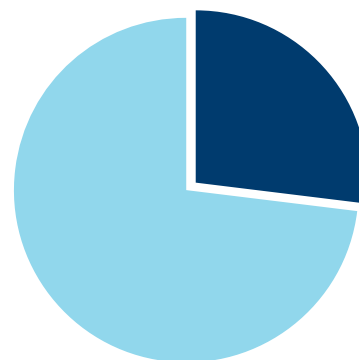
Based on nearly 700 responses, the findings revealed that people are now working longer hours and producing more but feel less engaged with their work and less connected to their co-workers. Two-thirds of survey respondents say their workload has increased from what it was prior to Covid-19 and the related increase in remote work, and slightly more than half say their productivity has increased as well. Yet just 27% say their motivation to deliver results for their organization has increased. In the absence of action by leadership, this combination signals a potential for burnout, and is likely one of the drivers of the record-breaking exodus that has come to be known as The Great Resignation. Better understanding the increased demands employees say they are experiencing is an important first step in determining what actions leaders can take to re-engage their talent and reduce the risk of burnout and resignation.



**Two-thirds** of survey respondents say their workload has increased from what it was prior to Covid-19.



**Slightly more than half** say their productivity has increased as well.



**Just 27%** say their motivation to deliver results for their organization has increased.



## KEY FINDING:

### Employees feel the need to reskill and upskill.

Just as organizations have recognized a greater need for speed and innovative ideas to adapt to fast-changing situations, their employees—who are handling heavier workloads and the expectation to increase productivity—have recognized a need for new or enhanced skills. Specifically, more than half of respondents said their need for project management skills has increased during the pandemic. Remote work often complicated the project management process by forcing changes in communication methods. Quick check-ins for status updates that used to happen effortlessly as project team members passed each others' desks during the course of the workday now take more energy. Access to documents and resources was particularly challenging for those whose shift to remote work was sudden. Project momentum suffered when the departure of key team members happened remotely, with remaining colleagues scrambling to ensure the transfer of key information and reallocation of responsibilities. Combined, these impacts often held up projects just when organizations needed rapid progress the most, and employees felt ill-equipped to move them along.

Employees are also feeling increased pressure to deliver more innovative solutions. Sixty-six percent say their need for creativity and innovation skills has increased, reflecting an awareness that automation is changing the nature of the work that humans do, and that the race to improve products, services and business processes has never been more intense.

Upskilling employees, whether in project management, creative thinking and innovation, or other areas, is a critical need for employers. Supporting people in their pursuit of new or enhanced skills does more than make people more effective in their current roles. It also sends a signal they are valued and makes them feel more confident, which is positively associated with employee engagement.<sup>1</sup> A 2021 survey by PwC found that 77% of employees say they are ready to learn new skills or to completely retrain.<sup>2</sup> With many workers feeling their roles are under increasing pressure from automation, learning new skills isn't just a preference; people feel it is becoming a matter of survival. It's no wonder that employees who feel unsupported when it comes to building their skills are more likely to consider leaving their employers.<sup>3</sup> Complicating matters, many are concerned that remote and hybrid work will reduce opportunities for upskilling and career growth, a notion that leaders must move quickly to dispel.



**77% of employees say they are ready to learn new skills or to completely retrain. — PwC<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Hyland, P., Garrad, L., & Reeves, D. (2018, May 27). *Organizational confidence: the key to building a high-commitment work environment*. Mercer. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/high-commitment-work-environment.html>

<sup>2</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2021, February). *Hopes and Fears 2021*. PwC. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/upskilling/hopes-and-fears.html>

<sup>3</sup> Zema, M. C. C. (2021, September 13). *Research: Workforce of 2022: Reskilling, Remote and More*. Amdocs. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from <https://www.amdocs.com/insights/research-workforce-2022-reskilling-remote-and-more>





Leaders may want to consider:

- Formally evaluating the effects of recent events on career development opportunities: How have they impacted mentoring? Networking? Training? Cross-department exposure?
- Acknowledging those impacts and reemphasizing the organization's commitment to ongoing learning and supporting employees' career development.
- Offering resources to enable employees to pursue job-related training and develop opportunities on their own, since many are willing to take control of their own learning.
- Asking managers to develop personalized plans, especially with their top talent, to begin to make up for lost opportunities.

## Dispersed Teams Impact Workplace Connections

Obviously, effectively integrating remote or hybrid work on a permanent basis is one of the top issues many leaders face, and not only in terms of its impact on talent development. The strong preference many employees have for retaining ongoing flexibility to work from home (WFH), at least some of the time, is an important consideration for leaders concerned with attracting and retaining talent. Citing benefits such as reclaiming commute time and avoiding related expenses, an improved work-life balance, fewer distractions, and the freedom to live almost anywhere, workers with skills in high demand seem unlikely to compromise. Many employers—not only small businesses but also major corporations, from Capital One to Twitter—have also come to recognize the value of offering the option to work remotely. Beyond attracting good people and keeping them happy, adopting a remote or hybrid work model can result in significant cost savings for larger companies—as much as \$11,000 per year for every employee who works remotely half of the time—by reducing the money spent on rent and utilities, maintenance and cleaning services, office supplies and equipment, and food and beverages, as well as potentially lightening their tax burden.<sup>4</sup> Despite advantages for many employees and employers, adjusting to a more permanent remote or hybrid workplace is still presenting challenges.

<sup>4</sup> Global Workplace Analytics. (2021, October 17). *Work-at-Home After Covid-19 - Our Forecast*. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://globalworkplaceanalytics.com/work-at-home-after-covid-19-our-forecast>



## KEY FINDING:

Workers today feel less connected to even their closest co-workers, and they overwhelmingly attribute it to the shift to a fully or partially remote workplace.

With opportunities for chance meetings in hallways and the lunchroom diminished, it might not be surprising that many people feel less connected to co-workers with whom they work infrequently. In fact, Microsoft studied its own employees and reported that the pandemic-driven shift to fully-remote work resulted in significantly less time spent collaborating with those outside of their own teams.<sup>5</sup> But it isn't only these loose-tie connections that seem to have been affected. In this more recent AMA survey, nearly half of respondents say they feel less connected even to the people with whom they work quite regularly. Seventy percent of that group said these weakened connections were directly due to a hybrid or remote work environment, and employees most often said the negative impact was greatest on their sense of belonging. Addressing this is particularly imperative, since recent findings by McKinsey cited "not feeling a sense of belonging" as one of the top three reasons employees are currently leaving organizations.<sup>6</sup> Among those who feel less connected than before, 60% also reported feeling less motivated at work, suggesting clear implications for long-term productivity.

Maintaining and strengthening the connections between employees is also crucial to maximizing an organizations' collective ability to develop and implement new ideas. When they no longer work in the same building and on the same schedule, people in different teams, departments, or divisions rarely get the chance to connect on a casual basis. As a result, employees lose valuable opportunities to create bridges to co-workers outside their immediate teams, cutting them off from important sources of ideas, perspectives, and information outside their own subject area. While individuals may be less aware of this impact, research has shown that these weakening ties between teams and departments may have a negative effect on an organization's corporate culture and potential for creativity and innovation.<sup>7</sup>



**Nearly half say they feel less connected than before and among those, 60% feel less motivated at work.**

<sup>5</sup> Yang, L., Holtz, D., Jaffe, S., et al. (2022). *The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers*. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 6, 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-021-01196-4>

<sup>6</sup> de Smet, A., Dowling, B., Mugayar-Baldocchi, M., & Schaninger, B. (2021, September 8). *'Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The Choice Is Yours*. McKinsey & Company. Retrieved January 25, 2022, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

<sup>7</sup> Colella, V., & Kidder, D. (2021, June 29). *Strengthening Weak Ties to Spark Innovation for the Future of Work*. Thrive Global. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/strengthening-weak-ties-to-spark-innovation-for-the-future-of-work/>

Fortunately, there are steps leaders can take to address weakening ties, whether within or across teams.

Actions to consider include:

- Focusing on empathic leadership. The connection between employees and their managers has become more vital than ever for those spending more time working remotely. Half of employees say mentorship from their manager has become more important to them during the pandemic, according to one study.<sup>8</sup>
- Developing communities of practice that encourage employees to connect around common needs and interests, such as employee resource groups or affinity groups.
- Facilitating opportunities for employees to participate in projects outside of their immediate areas where their skills and knowledge can add value and support cross-functional ties.
- Offering work-sponsored social activities. In the AMA survey, those who say they now feel more connected to their co-workers were significantly more likely to report their organizations organize social activities to help maintain those relationships. This may be a missed opportunity in some organizations, since 55% of respondents say their organization does not hold social activities of any kind—in person or virtual.
- Maximizing in-person occasions. Even among organizations that intend to remain fully remote—a small minority—most make periodic in-person events part of their plan to foster a sense of connection and shared corporate culture that can be leveraged throughout the year.

## Employee Engagement Must Remain a Top Priority

Fifty-nine percent of respondents said that overall employee engagement in their organization needs improvement, but only 41% say their company is focusing on initiatives to drive engagement. Understandably, enhancing employee engagement may have been set aside for other projects that seemed more urgent during the crisis. But, in light of the extremely tight labor market in many industries, a recommitment to improved employee engagement may be well worth considering.

### KEY FINDING:

Many organizations could and should do more now to improve employee engagement.

The small fraction of respondents from the AMA survey—18%—who rated their organization's overall employee engagement as better than before Covid-19 report that their organizations are realizing gains more often than others in terms of motivation (68% of this group vs. 11% of all others reported increased motivation) and productivity (85% vs. 43%).

In addition, the level of employee engagement is also tightly correlated with a company's ability to attract and retain top talent. More than 50% of respondents say their organization is having difficulty both with attracting new talent and keeping good people. But the problem is reported nearly twice as often by respondents who say their organization's employee engagement suffered during the pandemic and needs to improve (62% of this group said their organizations are having difficulty recruiting new talent vs. 34% of all others).



**59%** say employee engagement in their organization needs improvement, but only **41%** say there are initiatives focused on doing so.

<sup>8</sup> Starner, T. (2021, December 7). *This is the big opportunity employers are missing out on during COVID*. HR Executive. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from <https://hrexecutive.com/this-is-the-big-opportunity-employers-are-missing-out-on-during-covid/>

Employees today expect ongoing efforts to improve their employee experience, whether it is related to having a safe and comfortable work environment, reliable technology, or easy access to company-sponsored benefits. Even the experience at most physical offices has been affected by the pandemic, and delivering a consistent employee experience to those working remotely has presented special challenges, some of which are overdue to be addressed in many organizations.

Leaders can begin by:

- Empathizing with each employee's needs and situation, extending flexibility and support where feasible.
- Committing to a process for continually elevating the employee experience—even in small ways.
- Recognizing people's contributions and the extraordinary effort many have put forth to help their organizations survive.
- Emphasizing the reasons employees can be proud to work for the organization, by focusing on the organization's purpose and sharing stories and examples of ways it lives by its values.

## The Bottom Line

The long-term effects of the global pandemic will continue to be felt in the business world and have created ongoing challenges for both employees and employers. As leaders determine the post-pandemic path for their organizations, it is prudent to include concrete steps to make their organizations more attractive to current and potential employees—and to get the best efforts of those they employ. No one size fits all, but critical themes have emerged: a focus on reskilling and upskilling, fostering a sense of connection and belonging, and revisiting employee engagement are all worthy initiatives for consideration.



**Organizations where employee engagement needs to improve report difficulty recruiting new talent almost twice as often as others: 62% vs. 34%.**

**For more information on how AMA can support your employee engagement initiatives, please visit us at [www.amanet.org](http://www.amanet.org)**





## BRAVEN

March 23, 2022

Re: *The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic*

To the Honorable Members of the Committees on Economic Development and Oversight & Investigations,

In America, we've promised that hard work and ambition will be met with equality of opportunity. The reality is that the majority of college undergraduates are in a quiet crisis. While education has the potential to be the great equalizer, even before the Covid pandemic:

30%

Only **30%** of the 1.3 million annual first-generation or low-income 4-year college enrollees landed strong jobs after graduation. In NYC, only 15% of Latinx and 11% of Black students of public NYC high schools ultimately attend and graduate from college ready to secure a strong first job.<sup>1</sup>

66¢

A bachelor's degree holder from a low-income background starting their career earns only **66 cents on the dollar** compared to those from higher-income backgrounds.<sup>2</sup>

5X

Those who are initially underemployed after graduation from college are **5x** more likely to be underemployed after 5 years than those who were not.<sup>3</sup>

**For these reasons and more, we encourage NYC policymakers and stakeholders to consider a broad spectrum of workforce development programs that are inclusive of programs for those earning, or who have earned bachelor's degrees, especially young people of color and those from low-income households and/or under-represented neighborhoods in NYC. That notion underlies many of the policy recommendations we share below:**

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Use a racial equity lens to put public funding to work to accelerate the careers of all jobless youth including those working on or with college degrees.**

- **Fund academic courses focused on career at the Baccalaureate levels.**
- **Design integrated, academic, and funded workforce development/career supports and courses into the CUNY system.** This would impact individual citizens' social mobility and the return on investment to the economy r from the boosted economic outcomes of graduates.
- **Direct public resources to communities most impacted by racism, disinvestment, and Covid-19.** We are appreciative that equity is a major pillar of Mayor Adams' blueprint for NYC's economic recovery from the pandemic.

**2. Improve the quality, transparency, integration and effectiveness of WFD data and consider new metrics that capture the outcomes for individuals earning a bachelor's degree.**

- **Adopt Braven's strong first job metric for Bachelors degree earners:** Braven defines a strong first job as one that requires a bachelor's degree and is full-time, as well as includes some combination of promotion pathways, employee benefits, and a market-competitive starting salary.

<sup>1</sup> Composite statistics based on sources including NYC Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Economic Policy Institute, NY Fed, and National Association of College and Employers.

<sup>2</sup> Brookings Institution. A College Degree is Worth Less if You are Raised Poor. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [Burning Glass Technologies' Report: The Permanent Detour – Underemployment's Long-Term Effects on the Careers of College Grads](#)

- **Integrate the siloed workforce ecosystem:** The current process for distributing workforce development funding is not streamlined. Because of this, there is an absence of integrated, coordinated quality data because the data exists separately in various agencies in forms that do not allow it to be easily tracked or monitored.

### 3. Fund new program innovation and development with at least \$100 million in new funding per year. This Strong Jobs Fund should be:

- **Results oriented - is focused on a set of common outcomes that could be achieved through multiple means** (i.e. academic courses focused on career, expanded career services staff and resources, partnerships with employers, apprenticeships, bridge programs).
- **Aimed at increasing career accelerating, integrated work experiences** such as research, internships, apprenticeships, consulting projects with employers and more.
- **Open for general and specific sectors** (i.e life sciences, technology, cultural work, and health.)
- **Allow use of funds for 360 degree wraparound services on campus to increase students' ability to learn and earn.** These include childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment.
- **Public and privately funded through an employer matching grant.**
- **Available to 2 and 4-year public and non-profit IHEs with a preference for MSIs, CUNYs or non-Profits** serving significant percentages or numbers of Pell grant recipients, first generation college students and/or students who are BIPOC.

#### ABOUT BRAVEN

We know that our city and country's next generation of leaders will emerge from everywhere. We envision an American Dream Team—100,000 diverse leaders-in-the-making—prepared to access and thrive in strong first jobs. We also know they need a talent and persistence strategy that matches them in strength and diversity.

Braven partners in NYC and nationally with universities and employers to offer a two-part experience that empowers 4-year college students. This experience begins with a **credit-bearing college course** followed by a post-course **set of supports** that lasts through graduation. Our students, whom we call Fellows, emerge from Braven with the *skills, experiences, confidence, and networks* they need to land a strong first job and get on a path to economic freedom.

#### Outcomes:

Nationally, Braven has worked with 4,700+ students at 5 different colleges and universities in the last 7 years and our Fellows are persisting in college and achieving exciting levels of internship and job attainment. In 2021, 684 Braven Fellows across the country graduated from college. This new class is outpacing their peers nationally in strong job attainment by 16 percentage points (61% vs 45%) within six months of graduation.

- ❖ **Persistence:** 90% of our Fellows have graduated on-time.
- ❖ **Internships:** 62% of Braven college graduates have at least one internship during college, compared with 53% of their peers of color at large state universities.
- ❖ **Jobs:** Fellows graduating in 2021 outpace their peers nationally in strong job attainment within 6 months of graduation. 61% of Fellows secured quality full-time jobs worthy of their bachelor's or enrolled in graduate school compared to 45% of Black & Latinx students from public universities.

Here in NYC - one of our newer regions - 113 Braven Lehman Fellows graduated in 2021. This new class has attained an 82% employment rate within six months of graduation. Importantly, Braven Lehman Fellow graduates are more likely to experience economic mobility in their first job than New Yorkers with college degrees in various stages of their careers. Specifically, 74% of Braven graduates from

Lehman are earning \$34,000 or more in their first job out of college, compared to 71% of working age (ages 25-64) New Yorkers with Bachelor's Degrees earning \$34,000+ in various stages of their careers.

### **Braven's Approach:**

Braven's strong results are driven by our two-part core approach which we implement in partnership with Lehman College, Rutgers University-Newark, San José State University, National Louis University and Spelman College. Fellows gain the skills, confidence, experiences and social capital they need to be on a path to economic freedom. On average, fellows receive a 2.5 year overall "Braven experience."

- Part I: Accelerator Course: The Braven experience begins with an online and in-person career-acceleration course that Fellows take for credit. Fellows complete weekly online modules and assignments to develop in five professional competencies. Volunteer professionals from local employers, called Leadership Coaches, facilitate the in-person time and lead teams of 5-8 Fellows through weekly Learning Labs, sharing real-world application and feedback.
- Part II: Post-Course Experience: Following the course, Post-Accelerator Fellows (PAFs) receive additional opportunities to stay on track to securing strong internships and jobs through 1:1 on professional mentoring and talent connections facilitated by Braven.

**Braven Employer Partners:** Partnerships with employers play a key role. For employers, these partnerships provide meaningful employee professional development and offer early access to diverse talent. For Fellows, these partnerships build their networks and open doors to strong internships and jobs.

Our Employer Partners invite students on company Treks, sponsor events, participate in student capstone challenges and support the work financially. Braven also recruits local professionals, including many from Employer Partners, to serve as Leadership Coaches, Mock Interviewers, and Professional Mentors. Our Leadership Coaches lead teams of 5-8 Fellows through the course, teaching them how to navigate the professional world while getting hands-on practice managing diverse, millennial teams.

### **CONCLUSION**

As NYC was the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic and works toward an equitable recovery, Braven can help by being a key intervention to connect and prepare NYC college students from humble beginnings for high-opportunity careers and the economic freedom they bring. **In addition to our Lehman College partnership, other CUNY Senior Colleges are interested in bringing Braven to their campuses. Given the financial challenges stemming from the Pandemic - support from the City would help bridge the gap in order to bring support to them now when students need it the most.**

The policy changes we recommend will allow our current CUNY students and alumni to overcome barriers to employment, build the skills that they need for in-demand occupations and retain the jobs that can support them and their families. **Broadening our workforce development focus to also be inclusive of young people from a low-income or under-represented background who are earning or who have earned bachelor's degrees is in the best interest of NYC.** Investing in job seekers is a win-win scenario for both job seekers and employers and can drive a more equitable recovery.

Sincerely,

Kilsys Payamps-Roure

NYC Executive Director, Braven

*For more information, please view our website at [braven.org](http://braven.org) or email me: [kilsys@bebraven.org](mailto:kilsys@bebraven.org)*

**Testimony of Eli Dvorkin**  
**Editorial & Policy Director, Center for an Urban Future**

**Before the NYC Council Committee on Economic Development &  
Committee on Oversight & Investigations**

**Expanding and Improving NYC's Workforce Development System**

**March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon.

My name is Eli Dvorkin and I'm the editorial and policy director at the Center for an Urban Future, an independent research organization focused on building a more equitable economy in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

With roughly 310,000 fewer New Yorkers in the labor force today than before the pandemic, there is little doubt that a major new investment in workforce development is needed.

I'd like to focus my brief remarks on four key steps that city government should take to make the city's workforce development system stronger and more effective.

**First, city leaders should focus on scaling up the city's most effective workforce development programs.** New York's exemplary nonprofit career training organizations serve no more than a few dozen to a few hundred New Yorkers each year. The city should launch a \$100 million competitive grant program designed to enable effective organizations to partner, scale, and build accessibility into their programs, ensuring that far more New Yorkers can gain access to what's already working.

**Second, expand support for bridge models, which provide crucial on-ramps into effective training programs for in-demand occupations.** Too many New Yorkers struggle to gain entry to best-in-class job training due to gaps in literacy, math skills, and digital fluency. New bridge programs can open doors to effective career training for many of the New Yorkers hit hardest by the pandemic and create connections among organizations where few exist today.

**Third, spark hundreds more apprenticeship programs, especially in high-wage fields that are insufficiently diverse, such as technology, finance, advertising, and the green economy.**

Apprenticeships are a proven model for launching individuals without a college credential into family-sustaining careers, but the city is home to just a handful outside the building trades and has made too little progress in recent years. The city should partner with CUNY, training providers, and industry to launch at least 100 new apprenticeship pathways in growing fields and commit to training 5,000 residents annually through

apprenticeships by 2025, while drawing on the underutilized Empire State Apprenticeship tax credit to help fund this training.

**Fourth, integrate workforce development into future rezonings.** To date, very few workforce investments have resulted from rezonings. The Council should integrate investments in local hiring and training networks into rezonings from the start, ensuring that the infrastructure exists to help local residents benefit economically from new development.

For much more on these and other ideas, please check out our website at [nycfuture.org](http://nycfuture.org), and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

# THE HOPE PROGRAM

work . grow . sustain

## The HOPE Program Economic Development Testimony March 2022

The HOPE Program (HOPE) empowers New Yorkers to build sustainable futures through comprehensive training, jobs, advancement, and lifelong career support. We enroll approximately 400 new jobseekers each year and provide ongoing support to 900+ graduates of previous cohorts, with a focus on New Yorkers facing systemic barriers to employment, such as histories with the criminal legal system, substance abuse, homelessness, lack of education and credentials and others. With training sites conveniently located in Downtown Brooklyn and the South Bronx; we serve adults (ages 18+) from all five boroughs.

HOPE offers a range of programs to cater to the skills and interests of our jobseekers, as well as emerging labor market needs. To this end, we offer comprehensive general career readiness training, which includes digital literacy, case management and mental health support, financial literacy and access and more. We also partner with employers to provide industry-specific opportunities in fields such as security, health care, and green construction and maintenance. In fact, while much of New York City's nonprofit social safety net struggled during the peak of the pandemic, HOPE expanded our green jobs training to include YouthBuild (high school equivalency, job skills, leadership training, industry-recognized credentials, etc. for New Yorkers ages 18-24) and high-efficiency HVAC training.

Because of our industry alignment and comprehensive approach, HOPE consistently achieves outcomes among the strongest in the field, including 75 - 80% job placement and 75 - 80% one-year retention, broadly recognized as a proxy for long-term attachment to the workforce.

Since the onset of COVID-19, HOPE and the communities we serve have faced, and risen to, unprecedented challenges, including:

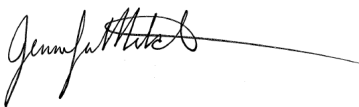
- **Disproportionate Job Loss:** Nearly two-thirds (64%) of jobs lost in New York City during the first month of the pandemic were held by workers paid less than \$40,000 annually. Over two-thirds (68%) of job losses were among people of color, with Latine workers bearing a particularly high burden, experiencing 32% of lost jobs compared to a 26% share of all private sector jobs. 36% percent of all city private workers with a high school education or less lost jobs, compared to 20% of those with a four-year degree or more who were displaced (The New School Center for New York City Affairs, 2020). Today, while joblessness has declined among some communities, Black New Yorkers continue to face a crisis-level unemployment rate of 15% (The City, 2022).
- **Increased Funding Needs:** As we pivoted to a remote model, HOPE underwent significant private fundraising efforts in order to provide laptops and Wi-Fi access to jobseekers in digital deserts. We also secured private funds to meet the basic needs of New Yorkers, including access to food, Metrocards,

cell phone and utility bills, and others. Without these critical services, much of our population would have lacked the stability and access needed to focus on training and secure new jobs.

We join New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC) in advocating for the following engagement from New York City to address these challenges and fuel New York City's equitable recovery:

- COVID re-employment: We echo NYCETC's call for a \$250 million reemployment program which centers subsidized employment and employer engagement. HOPE currently offers several programs which offer paid training and post-training subsidized employment. Both of these strategies are essential to ensuring that the families we engage with can meet their needs while building skills for future employment and career growth.
- Wraparound Services: We also echo NYCETC's call for an investment in comprehensive wraparound services, including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment. This approach has long been core to HOPE's work and has fueled the success of thousands of New Yorkers throughout our history. The need for wraparound services has become more acute with the onset of COVID-19. In fact, HOPE saw a 125% increase in graduates returning to HOPE for supplemental support services and reconnections to the workforce following pandemic-related layoffs compared with pre-pandemic years. Even as New York City continues to re-open our economy, the communities that bore the brunt of the pandemic are still struggling and in need of our support as they prepare for long-lasting careers.
- Sector-specific Investment: Finally, we call for a significant investment in new program innovation and development, with a focus on green sector careers, which contributes to greater environmental justice and supports New York City's bold sustainability goals. HOPE is proud to be the service provider for the NYC CoolRoofs program, which is a strong model for combining workforce development, subsidized employment, and an environmental focus that yields strong job outcomes for participants. We encourage more programs following this model.

We thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and welcome the opportunity to discuss further. Please contact me at [jmitchell@thehopeprogram.org](mailto:jmitchell@thehopeprogram.org) or 347-773-4782 to discuss further.



Jennifer Mitchell  
Executive Director



**Written Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Economic Development Oversight - The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic held on March 21st, 2022**



**Presented by the Consortium for Worker Education, Inc.**

Thank you Committee Chair Fariás, Council members and Committee staff for the opportunity to submit written testimony about how the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) and our network of workforce development community-based organizations (CBOs) and union partners ameliorates the numbers of unemployed New Yorkers. CWE actively engages with the City Council and State agencies to deliver workforce education and training to underserved NYC community residents. CWE's Jobs to Build On program (JtBO) and Worker Service Center Program (WSC) were launched by the City Council as its own Workforce Development initiatives.

Over the course of its history CWE has served tens of thousands of New Yorkers by providing workforce training and job placement services. We do so by partnering with over 40 community based and labor organizations. Providing workforce development programs through the CWE network of partners has assured a continuum of workforce services to New Yorkers, through partnering organizations, as they seek out job opportunities. We have also designed workforce development program models and services as opportunities for New Yorkers and small businesses.

To deliver these network workforce preparation services at our current level we are requesting **restoration funding at the previous fiscal year's level of \$7.655 million**. With this funding, we will maintain robust services for our NYC job seekers and continue to evolve to meet the changing labor force and workforce development needs of the City.

In 2020 CWE and our partners initiated pivotal training and service delivery adaptation, not only to provide continuity of services, but to meet the needs of a changing workforce and job market amidst a global pandemic.

The key initial pivot was to transfer instruction and participant services to online platforms. Each of our partners succeeded in providing workforce preparation and continuity in skills training



through the implementation of remote classes. For one example, our partner SEIU 1199 was able to maintain all of its ABE, ESL, HSE courses through online instruction, providing classes for over 1800 adult learners. In addition, it initiated new online training in environmental services, to train non-clinical healthcare workers on infection control; online training for Nurse Assistants leading to in-demand jobs in nursing homes; and Central Sterile Supply processing.

As the pandemic persevered, our community services were modified as a mix of online, in person, and hybrid instruction. These varying approaches have come with benefits and challenges. In a recent survey of our network partners, many noted the benefits of in person instruction, both on the quality of education and on the retention of participants. However, many also noted the difficulties that have arisen with instructors testing positive and the corresponding disruptions to classes. Online instruction, while not as strong as in person, has generally provided greater stability and allowed individuals to participate regardless of their relative commuting proximity to the partner organization.

In May 2021 CWE published a report in partnership with the Center for New York City Affairs at the New School surveying workers in Astoria, Queens to examine the effects of the pandemic in an evolving working class neighborhood on its workers. The results found sharp disparities in how workers were impacted by the pandemic. A consistent reference to Health, Safety, Food and Housing insecurities underlined respondents' concerns resulting from the pandemic. Nearly half of those surveyed reported some degree of food insecurity, with the numbers four times as high for Latino residents as white residents. Over half of black respondents reported "no confidence" in being able to meet their next rental payment. Rates of anxiety also saw a notable jump. For respondents whose work was disrupted due to the pandemic, over half reported feeling anxious a majority of the time.<sup>1</sup>

These effects have placed greater demand on our service partners to provide more diverse and enhanced wraparound services. This has largely come in the form of food assistance, direct cash benefits, and enhanced mental health counseling services. These wraparound services have been able to effectively supplement our training programs, in order to provide participants with the stability they need to achieve employment and career goals.

Our workforce development services have not simply adapted to the pandemic environment, but responded in addressing the changing needs of the workforce and employers.

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<sup>1</sup> L.K Moe, The Astoria Project: Employment, Health, and Well-being in One New York City Neighborhood During Covid, Center for New York City Affairs (CNYCA) at The New School, May 2021. <http://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/2021/6/2/the-astoria-project-employment-health-and-well-being-in-one-new-york-city-neighborhood-during-covid>

As reported by James Parrot, the Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies at The New School's Center for New York City Affairs, the jobs impact on New York City was over three times greater than the US. While some have noted a relatively tight national job market, thousands of workers in NYC have been left struggling to find viable employment. As Parrot notes in a December, 2021 report, "The pandemic has induced far steeper New York State job losses than any other economic event since at least 1939, and the Empire State's 805,000 pandemic jobs deficit as of October was three times that of the nation overall. With 6.4 percent of national jobs before the pandemic, New York now accounts for 19.2 percent of all the pandemic's U.S. job loss."<sup>2</sup>

This unprecedented disruption in the NYC economy has come at the expense of our most vulnerable communities. As with any shift in economic conditions, there is an essential need to deliver workforce preparation, skills and technical training, and employment access to severely impacted communities and their residents. Currently, CWE partners are introducing new training opportunities and expanding their programming offerings for in demand fields, such as IT, data analytics, and healthcare. We are experiencing greater demand for ESL services due to the populations of aforementioned underserved communities who have been most negatively affected economically by the employment crisis.

CWE and the robust network of workforce service partners responded dynamically to meet the workforce needs of our communities' residents and business partners. As our city continues to adapt and recover from the pandemic-induced changes, we are committed proactively to serving the needs of New York's unemployed and underemployed residents.

We are most appreciative of the essential support from the New York City Council in building workforce program opportunities and funding these programs. We look forward to working with the Council in delivering these vital services and on behalf of New York City workers.

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<sup>2</sup> James A. Parrott, New York State's Lagging Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic, Center for New York City Affairs (CNYCA) at The New School, December 14, 2021.  
<http://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/new-yorkstates-lagging-recovery-from-the-covid-19-pandemic-t-kndj>



## **TESTIMONY**

### **Preliminary Budget Hearing:**

“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:  
Worker Cooperatives As An Innovative Workforce Development Strategy”

### **Presented to:**

New York City Council  
Committee on Economic Development  
Hon. Amanda Fariás, Chair  
Committee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Chair

Mon, March 21, 2022

### **Prepared By:**

Anh-Thu Nguyen  
Director of Strategic Partnerships

**New York City Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative**

**Democracy at Work Institute**

115 E. 23rd Street, 3rd Floor-1550

New York, New York 10010

Good afternoon, Chair Farías, Chair Brewer, and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Economic Development and Committee on Oversight and Investigations. My name is Anh-Thu Nguyen, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Democracy at Work Institute, or DAWI. I am testifying as both a member of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) and the NYC Employment and Training Coalition.

Since 2014, WCBDI has:

- created more than 1000 jobs and pathways to business ownership.
- reached more than 9000 entrepreneurs with education and technical assistance services.
- created more than 175 new worker cooperative businesses that offer higher hourly wages, better working conditions and importantly, build wealth and equity for workers.

We have seen best practices and inspiring transformation through integrating worker ownership with workforce development, creating better jobs, improved industry standards, and economic stability and mobility for working families. I will share two NYC success stories that have become national models for high-road businesses and workforce development.

The south Bronx has for 37 years been home to Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), the largest worker cooperative in the country. CHCA has positively transformed home health care--a traditionally, low-wage, high-turnover industry, where the vast majority of workers are BIPOC immigrant women--by raising job quality and industry standards through worker ownership and continuous investment in an embedded on-the-job training and skills development program. This workforce development model operates on a seamless continuum from recruitment to training, certification, placement and employment and has produced incredible workforce development results. Of 630 jobseekers enrolled annually with CHCA's training program, 94% graduate with a portable credential and 85% are employed as home health aides. Of those, 68% remain employed after one year. All program graduates are guaranteed a job with CHCA, if they wish. In comparison, according to the national Benchmarking Project, similar low-income training programs on average secure employment for only 29% of enrollees, and of those just 38% remain employed after one year.

Another example: at DAWI, we partnered with the CUNY Institute of Mexican Studies to incubate and demonstrate another model for workforce development and social entrepreneurship--Radiate Consulting. We work together to identify promising, entrepreneurial graduates with barriers to employment and want to develop their careers as non-profit service providers. We provide wraparound services to support and engage worker-owners as they navigate the working world and launch their business, connect with clients, and build their skills as emerging young professionals and worker-owners.

Worker cooperative businesses are unique in their ability to establish, grow, and retain community wealth, to make entrepreneurship accessible, and to create stable, dignified work for all New Yorkers.

**We urge City Council to continue investing in worker cooperatives and the workforce development ecosystem in NYC, through:**

- **Enhancing WCBDI funding to \$5.012 million for FY23**
- **Establishing a dedicated and permanent Workforce Development Fund that provides sustainable, long-term funding for employment and training programs across all agencies and initiatives, and**
- **Funding new training program innovation and development programs that includes worker cooperatives with at least \$100 million in new funding per year.**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about worker cooperatives as an innovative workforce development strategy. We look forward to continuing the work to develop worker leadership, high road business models that positively transform industries and strengthen communities, and support NYC's economic recovery and resilience.

March 18, 2022

**Re: City Council Economic Development - Hearing on the City's Workforce Development Plans**

My name is Shandeeyaky Shabazz and I am the Branch Manager of Dress for Success New York City (NYC). It is my pleasure to provide a written testimonial regarding, "The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plan in the Wake of the Pandemic".

The mission of Dress for Success is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools that help women thrive in work and in life. Dress for Success NYC is part of this global organization that has provided services for over 1.2 million women in 144 cities and 23 countries,

Dress for Success Worldwide has worked with the NYCETC, its members and other collaborative partners in the community for 25 years. Although Dress for Success is a global organization our organization has played a significant role in supporting women in the Greater New York area.

Our focus in New York City is to continue to help women thrive and prosper in today's difficult and evolving workplace. We provide professional business attire, career coaching, workshops and networking, cohort-based learning, financial education, and leadership programming. Our clients are challenged more than ever before, and our services are critical to their economic stability. In 2022 we estimate that Dress for Success will provide over 2830 services to women in New York alone.

During the pandemic hundreds of women were displaced from front-line positions in areas of custodial services, retail, entry-level business, education, hospitality, banking, as well as travel. These women seized the opportunity to self-refer themselves to Dress for Success for help because many partner agencies and workforce development agencies were forced to pause services at the height of the pandemic. The women, whom we call our clients, shared their personal stories of job loss (33%), employed part-time with no benefits (26%), food insecurities (9%) and housing insecurities (9%). These statistics were devastating, and they each found support from Dress for Success.

Understanding the gravity of the first female recession where decades of economic progress for women was and still is at risk of a setback, we redesigned our programming structure from the in-person interactions to the virtual, offering services such as career coaching, group networking, personal/professional development workshops, financial education, and cohort learning, so that we could continue to support and meet our workforce development partners needs of their clients.

Today, we are pleased to see that our partners are once again able emerging from this devastating crisis, and we are very proud that we were able to be a lifeline to women at the peak of the pandemic. Dress for Success is dedicated to serving women of all nationalities, ages, and backgrounds. The women we serve are 60 percent POC, 40 percent single mothers, 50 percent living below the poverty level and a multigenerational population ranging in ages from 17 to 50+.

It is our observation that New York's recovery and ability to assist women with re-entering the workforce in jobs and positions that provide more than a basic living wage can only happen if we combine our efforts and ensure that women are given the support they need.

The current economic situation requires collaboration between all stakeholders to support job seekers in their return to the workforce. Many job seekers are struggling due to the hardships of the pandemic's

impact on the job market and the high inflation rate. Reconstructing and preparing a better more resilient labor force is an essential investment in the future of our underserved populations in our local communities, yet we continue to hear about and witness existing barriers to employment, such as high transportation costs, rising rates of childcare, gender-based challenges, unreliable internet connectivity, as well as food and housing insecurity, fueled by lower paying jobs in the current job market.

There is a dire need to upskill Jobseekers' current skills to meet the current market demand and the job market of the future. Economic development and workforce development go hand in hand to bridge the gap that job seekers are facing in today's post pandemic economy and beyond. Dress for Success designs and delivers such services and programs to help women overcome some of these barriers and can continue to make a difference at every phase of a woman's personal and professional journey from jobseeker to professional to leadership.

I look forward to continuing to work with NYCETC, members and community collaborations to improve the economic and employment status of jobseekers and their families in the community in the post pandemic world.

NYC Council Economic Development and Investigation committees written testimony

Mon. March 21

My name is Sheree Ferguson-Cousins. I am the Assistant Vice President of Workforce Development at Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey. Goodwill NYNJ is a local nonprofit that has provided customized training to help New Yorkers connect to employment for over a century. The mission of Goodwill NYNJ is to empower individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment to gain independence through the power of work. In 2021, Goodwill provided job placement, training, on-the-job coaching, and retention services for nearly 10,000 people who are unemployed or underemployed, almost half of them people with disabilities.

Goodwill NYNJ is committed to supporting the City's job recovery efforts in the wake of the pandemic. Our Bridge to Technology program aligns with the City's workforce development plan to create 100,000 jobs by 2027 in an equitable way through local hiring. This 5-week, full-time program provides unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers across the 5 boroughs with the specific literacy and numeracy skills needed to get prepared for Advanced Technology Training Programs and to connect to in-demand tech jobs. Bridge to Technology is an on-ramp to a career pathway for New Yorkers experiencing barriers and we provide comprehensive wraparound services to ensure their success.

The high-level goal of Bridge To Tech is to address diversity in the technology sector. Bridge programs level the playing field to make training accessible for all – in this case, especially for those New Yorkers who would typically not apply for advanced tech training programs. Our students come from diverse communities. Mostly adults who are unemployed or underemployed and who are currently receiving public assistance. Some of them lost jobs due to COVID-19 and others have been out of work for many years. They are New Yorkers who have largely been left out of advanced training programs available in the city simply because their math and reading scores deem them ineligible. Even when their interest, aptitude, and dedication are high. It is clear that we can't afford to leave talent on the sidelines. Especially if we want to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable workforce that will lead us into post-pandemic recovery.

Labor experts say that helping people land good jobs with career paths also takes coaching, mentoring, career guidance, moral support, tips on résumé writing and interviews, and job contacts. Nonprofits like Goodwill and our community partners that provide direct training and employment services have refined the comprehensive training approach to lift people out of poverty for decades.



**Why is funding Bridge To Tech programs important?** People of color continue to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and their representation need to increase to diversify the tech talent pipeline and develop a pool of talent in NYC. A report from The Center for an Urban Future notes that “expanding access to tech careers is one of the city’s best opportunities to reduce inequality and expand pathways out of poverty.” Current employment needs in the tech sector point in the right direction and will help in NYC’s recovery.

Receiving referrals to our Bridge program has been challenging due to the pandemic. The program is intentionally designed to serve job seekers from HRA workforce development contracts, and mandatory participation in these programs is still suspended. With fewer people coming through the system, our pool of candidates is significantly diminished. In addition, we are unable to refer clients who are still unvaccinated for technical certificate trainings to partners who require participants to be vaccinated. This affects our ability to support New Yorkers who are seeking advanced training.

To combat the lack of in-person referrals, we transformed our operations into a hybrid model - making virtual and face-to-face services available. We worked to increase our reach to meet the growing demand for assistance in our communities. We embraced the opportunities created by the move to virtual services and virtual work, which allows us to scale our reach beyond our four walls. Some of these services include job fairs, work readiness workshops, community resource fairs and more. Virtual work also provides opportunities for people with disabilities who struggle with mobility, to access new job opportunities.

Goodwill strongly believes in the importance of Bridge programming and additional funding would allow us to expand this innovative program model, through Bridge to Technology and by creating bridge programs to other sectors. Expanding bridge programming will result in more New Yorkers completing advanced training with the skills and credentials needed to succeed in a job, putting them on a career pathway with upward mobility and high earning potential. Bridge programs diversify the workforce and create a pipeline of talent here in New York. These programs move under- and unemployed New York City residents off public assistance and into a family-sustaining wage.

Removing barriers is a part of Goodwill’s mission and a critical component of our Bridge program is the wraparound supports provided to all students. We must ensure that all New Yorkers in training programs have access to comprehensive, 360-degree wraparound supports that improve their ability to engage in training programs and empower people to achieve their goals. Individualized wraparound supports can range from connecting parents with childcare to offering laptops and internet connectivity. All are invaluable to a person who is balancing work and life; we must make wraparound supports a standard in all workforce development programs.

## Written testimony for City Council's Committee on Economic Development

The community of women that Grace Outreach and Grace Institute of New York serves has been disproportionately impacted by the economic inequalities in our city, COVID, and the recession. Women of color, predominantly from Black and Latina communities, comprise 95% of our participants and 100% live below the poverty line, earning \$6,000 on average before enrollment. Our participants face several challenges to employment and economic self-sufficiency that were greatly exacerbated by COVID-19;

- 80% are mothers.
- Most are precariously housed, living in shelters or public housing, which became COVID epicenters.
- Low-income women and older women face significant gaps in digital literacy and are often unable to afford a computer or internet service.
- Undocumented women were not able to receive many of the government-funded supports provided to New Yorkers during the pandemic.

Structural inequalities like these have always kept women out of higher education and from earning living wage jobs, and now during COVID, they make them more vulnerable to unsafe working conditions, joblessness, and food scarcity.

As a member of NYCTC's policy council I am joining them in requesting that City Council's Committee on Economic Development put into place:

- \$250 million Covid reemployment program with subsidized employment and employer engagement
- Fund new training program innovation and development with at least \$100 million in new funding per year
- Invest in 360 degree wraparound services - including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment - that empower, provide security, and increase the ability to learn and earn
- Establish a dedicated and permanent Workforce Development Fund that provides sustainable, long-term funding for employment and training programs across all agencies and initiatives

--Danae Mcleod, Executive Director, Grace Outreach and Grace Institute of New York

## Testimony

**Tonya Gayle, Executive Director of Green City Force to the New York City Council  
Gale Brewer, Chair, Committee of Oversight and Investigations and  
Amanda Farias, Chair, Committee on Economic Development  
March 21, 2022**

Chairs Brewer and Farias, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the City Council Economic Development Hearing on the City's Workforce Development Plans. My name is Tonya Gayle. I serve as Executive Director of Green City Force (GCF), as well as a member of the NYCETC Policy Council. I'm moved to speak before you today because since 2009, GCF has worked at the intersection of environmental, economic and racial justice. I believe that these critical priorities are fully aligned with the components needed for the successful economic recovery for New York City.

As part of the NYCETC Policy Council, Green City Force supports the plan to commit \$100 million annually in new funding toward talent development programs, creating a permanent Workforce Development Fund to provide sustainable, long-term funding for employment and training programs across all agencies and initiatives made up of dedicated investments from subsidies enacted through city and state economic development corporations and the city's employer community, and \$250 million to launching an extensive (re)employment program supported with wage subsidies and training aligned to essential and growth sectors.

### About Green City Force

The mission of GCF is to train young leaders to power a green and inclusive society through service. Our pillars are service, training, sustainability and justice. We believe that these are nonpartisan principles and practices that all Americans should align with regardless of political party, race, creed, or socioeconomic status. A recent article written by General Stanley A. McChrystal states that [National Service Is One of the Few Things That Could Unite America](#). GCF is one of over 140 Corps within The Corps Network, a national organization fighting for investments in a national Civilian Climate Corps which would lead to equal access to quality employment and training, economic recovery, and infrastructure repairs. GCF's recruitment and AmeriCorps national service initiatives are focused in the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) which is a city within a city, representing roughly 1 in 15 New Yorkers. GCF is NYCHA's Civilian Climate Corps.

We are an urban climate corps that engages young residents ages 18-24 years old who have high school diplomas or equivalency in six or ten months of structured, full-time, national service and workforce training. 68% of our last graduated cohort identify as Black, multiracial or indigenous, and 55% as Hispanic. NYCHA communities face intersectional, structural issues related to environmental, economic and racial injustice. Through the Service Corps, young adults in NYCHA lead large-scale, multi-faceted sustainability initiatives improving environment and health for fellow residents. Working in teams, in partnership with resident leaders, agencies and other organizations, Corps Members gain skills, certifications and experience to secure family-supporting careers in the green economy.

The low- to moderate-income clients that we serve are all residents of NYCHA. In order to qualify for NYCHA housing a family's household income must be below 80% of the Area Median Income, although most NYCHA residents earn below that mark. As of January 1, 2020, the average household income at NYCHA is \$25,602 which is below the 2020 Federal Poverty Level for a family of four.

GCF has a 12- year track record of results serving NYCHA young adults and communities, which are 90% Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) (NYCHA's 2021 Resident Data Book). We work from an asset-based framework, recruiting BIPOC NYCHA young adults challenged by systemic barriers to economic mobility and pervasive effects of poverty, racial discrimination, environmental injustice, and divestment in public housing; all intensified by the pandemic.

GCF is unique in employing a climate corps model focused on public housing residents and communities. We recruit from the pool of 52,000 18-24 year old NYCHA residents. Pre-pandemic, the unemployment rate of 18 - 24 year old young adults in NYCHA was over 70%. The national unemployment rate for out-of-school 16-24 year olds is 9% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), 20% for Latinx and 30% for Black people (JobsFirstNYC, 2016).

GCF has a program completion rate of 81% and 82% of our graduates are working within six months of program completion. Average wages one year past service term is \$16.50/hr. Graduates of our corps get jobs in energy efficiency, horticulture and landscaping, sustainable construction, solar, composting, urban farming, nutrition and food, building operations and maintenance, zero waste and trade union jobs.

## GRADUATE TESTIMONIAL: DOMINGO MORALES



**"Green City Force put in so much resources to get me to the point where I am today.** From the idea of working with housing residents from the ages of 18-24.... (GCF) gave me the opportunity to be in a position to change people and teach people and to bring a skill."

- Founder, Compost Power,  
GCF graduate and winner of the  
2020 David Prize

*Domingo Morales, a GCF graduate, is an entrepreneur whose Compost Power enterprise works to hire GCF graduates.*

GCF has grown and distributed over 130,000 lbs of organic fresh produce inside urban spaces. Our Eco-Hubs are completely driven and built by Corps Members and our staff, many of whom are alumni of our program. These outcomes are examples of what a Civilian Climate Corps could achieve across New York City as a platform to build career tracks for frontline communities as priority populations.

In NYC and across the nation, there is latent talent and ability in young people who have been locked out of the economy as a whole let alone the green economy. At GCF, we believe in the knowledge and wisdom of people from frontline communities as the ones with the best understanding of what it takes to solve problems in their home communities, including climate solutions.



We created our corps in New York City as a working model for what we believe a bold citywide effort could look like:

- Enlist and train young people from low income housing communities as a priority population
- Equip them with the tools to change the trajectory of their lives and access good jobs
- A platform to develop a passion for sustainability and service, through being part of and driving large-scale environmental and health initiatives in environmental justice communities: conducting credible messenger campaigns to educate residents about energy and water conservation, zero waste practices, healthy

food preparation in their homes; installing low-cost energy measures; building composting facilities; maintaining and expanding the urban forest

- Design service as a path to greater wellbeing and means to enlist young people to become contributors, entrepreneurs and builders of the future green cities in our country
- Employ intentional program design to center equity
- Provide adequate, consistent resources per member to support quality in programming including supportive and follow-up to support retention as well as career paths post-corps, and funding for projects (costs for materials, partnerships with local community groups, resident participatory planning for community-based initiatives) and for capacity
- Incorporate priority people, places and implementation partners for rapid implementation and longer-term impact
- Require that operating organizations employ a career paths framework
- Envision at least a ten-year effort so local corps like Green City Force can undertake ambitious legacy projects for systemic change in New York City, such as building eco-hubs in every NYCHA community.

To dismantle barriers, you have to be holistic and intentional. This is what is so important and exciting about the potential of a Civilian Climate Corps. Leveraging strengths from every community across the City for collective impact.

This past year, GCF has been working with NYCHA on some Urban Forestry projects noted here in [this article](#) featuring GCF graduate Sadiqua Minor. Maintaining and developing NYCHA's urban forest is a strategic priority for NYCHA's climate mitigation plans, and also for the health and wellbeing of NYCHA residents across the portfolio. In partnering with NYCHA, the US Forest Service and the Nature Conservancy, GCF graduates working on GCF's social enterprise conducted a first phase of inventorying NYCHA's trees while learning new skills and technologies under the tutelage of professionals. Expanding this work could be a signature project of the Civilian Climate Corps with lasting benefits for climate and equity.





*“To address two of the greatest challenges facing New York City today—the climate crisis and the unemployment crisis brought on by the pandemic—the next administration should create an NYC Climate Corps. The Climate Corps would leverage federal investment through the proposed American Jobs Act to get tens of thousands of unemployed and underemployed young adult New Yorkers back to work in priority environmental projects like greening NYCHA campuses through energy retrofits and solar installation and transforming Rikers Island into a hub for renewable energy. Through these projects, Climate Corps participants who might otherwise face barriers to employment would acquire long-term skills they can use to build careers in the emerging green economy and find opportunities in the public and private sector.”* -Tonya Gayle’s contribution about creating a NYC Climate Corps from [RE:NEW YORK CITY: 250 Ideas from New Yorkers to Revive NYC's Economy, Spark Good Jobs, Build a More Equitable City](#)



Since 2015, the Green Job Corps City Council Speaker Initiative and A Greener NYC investments have been vital to our organization and community success. GCF has been honored to have past support by Borough President Richards and former Council Member Constantinides via A Greener NYC, as well as from Council Member Schulman and many other current council members. Our priority is to provide young adults living in New York City Housing Authority developments (NYCHA) the tools and workforce opportunities to lead a “green city” rooted in social, economic, and environmental justice. As part of our program Corps Members (CMs) enter 6-10 month AmeriCorps national service terms. While in service full-time, they lead large-scale raised-bed farms, that we call Eco-Hubs, in NYCHA communities across the city. GCF’s programs are rooted in the belief that young NYCHA residents are uniquely positioned through leadership, training, and service to drive change in public housing communities while building skills, earning certifications, and gaining experience to help launch their careers and achieve economic prosperity.

Our Eco-Hubs are incubators for Corps Members to develop the skills necessary to gain employment in green jobs and sustainability careers. Each site distributes fresh produce weekly, provides the space for nutrition education, on-site composting, and actively encourages improved energy behavior transforming neighborhoods while informing local, city, state, national, and global goals for climate and equity.

City Council funding will help to support 100 Corps Members training, uniforms, and metro-cards, alumni and career support services, capacity to maintain, and operate our existing five Eco-Hub sites in the Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, and lead the building of a new Eco-Hub at a Queens NYCHA site.

In closing, we are excited about the potential investments and priorities under the Adams Administration and the City Council and we thank you for your ongoing support and consideration for expanded investments in economic prosperity for all New Yorkers.





# HANAC

*Serving the needs of the community since 1972*

March 21, 2022

By E-mail:

New York City Council  
Committee on Economic Development  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairs Bruer and Farías:

Thank you Chairs, Council Member Bruer, Council Member Farías and the other members for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Stacy Bliagos and I am the Executive Director of HANAC, I also serve on the Policy Council of NYCETC. NYCETC is the largest workforce development association in the country. HANAC is a multi-faceted social service organization that has served vulnerable populations for over 50 years, touching the lives of over 30,000 individuals with a wide range of programs and services for diverse and multi-ethnic communities across the city.

I would like to thank the members of the Council for their steadfast support of HANAC's programs throughout the years. With our partnership we have been able to serve thousands of individuals and families with programming such as senior centers, youth development, and workforce training.

HANAC's Employment and Training Program helps members of the community find the right career by focusing on industries that have growing jobs. Our services include job preparation, job training, job licensing assistance, licensing fee payment, and yearly job support; in addition to this, we offer job placement assistance (for individuals trained by our program, as well as for those who are already qualified for the different industries), these services are 100% cost-free to our program participants.

HANAC Employment and Training Services (JTBO) has committed since its beginnings to assisting all individuals citywide searching for employment opportunities that support low-income families of New York City.

However, COVID-19 has severely impacted New York City's workforce.

- Individuals in underserved communities did not have the option of working remotely, they either lost their jobs or had to make the difficult decision to go to work every day



# HANAC

*Serving the needs of the community since 1972*

and risk their health. This was an impossible decision since childcare and schools turned virtual. Additionally, COVID-19 highlighted the digital inequities in underserved and immigrant communities.

- For workforce providers, budget cuts, and decreases in fundraising made it close to impossible to provide workforce development and training services.

This is why I urge you to invest in 360-degree wraparound services - including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment - that empower, provide security, and increase the ability to learn and earn

Even as the NYC job market is trying to recover, employers are struggling with finding qualified individuals to fill vacant positions, it is for this reason that I urge you to invest \$250 million. This must include wage and training subsidies and wraparound supports. Additionally, the COVID-19 reemployment program must include subsidized employment and employer engagement and fund new training program innovation and development with at least \$100 million in new funding per year.

Workforce development providers are being called on to aid in the City's economic recovery efforts; without increased resources workforce development sector is not in the best position to aid in the city's economic recovery efforts. We are grateful for the City Council's leadership in taking on this issue and support that it already gives for these services but we ask that you dedicate more. These existing resources allow organizations such as HANAC to operate valuable programming to our most vulnerable New Yorkers. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your committees and your colleagues on the Council to help discover new and innovative solutions to economic development.

Best Wishes,

*Stacy Bliagos*

Stacy Bliagos  
HANAC, Inc

**Testimony: New York City Council Hearing Committee on Economic Development jointly with  
the Committee on Oversight and Investigations**

**Submitted to  
New York City Council**

**Submitted by  
Diana Caba  
AVP for Policy & Community Engagement  
Hispanic Federation**

**March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairs Brewer and Farías, Ranking Members Avilés, Ayala, Gutiérrez, Joseph, Kagan, Krishnan, Riley, Salamanca, Williams, Won, Velázquez, Yeger and all committee members of the Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Oversight and Investigations, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Diana Caba, and I am the Assistant Vice President for Policy and Community Engagement for Hispanic Federation (HF); a non-profit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through community programs and legislative advocacy.

HF's testimony today is also informed by over 38 Latino non-profit organizations in all five boroughs that contributed to the development of *La Gran Manzana: The Road Ahead for New York City's Latino Community*<sup>1</sup>; a policy blueprint with recommendations on how the New York City Mayor and Council can improve the lives of nearly 2.5 million Latinos who call New York City home.

New York City's economy has been significantly shaken by the pandemic. The COVID-19 lockdowns cost Latino families their jobs and their businesses. For the poorest Latino New Yorkers, the loss of employment meant long lines at community food banks and concerns over being evicted from their homes. The economic recovery from this crisis will require significant investment from the City. Much of that recovery will depend on addressing immediate concerns such as jobs, small business support, hunger relief, and, importantly, affordable housing and eviction protection. It will be especially important to craft an economic recovery agenda that reaches Latinos in all five boroughs, expands loans and grants for businesses hurt by COVID-19, helps individuals and families stay in their homes, and supports workers' sense of stability and security by investing in wraparound services including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment that empower, provide security, and increase the ability to learn and earn. HF's network of Latino nonprofits is

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<sup>1</sup> Hispanic Federation. "La Gran Manzana: The Road Ahead for New York City's Latino Community," 2021.  
[https://www.hispanicfederation.org/advocacy/reports/la\\_gran\\_manzana\\_the\\_road\\_ahead\\_for\\_new\\_york\\_citys\\_latino\\_community/](https://www.hispanicfederation.org/advocacy/reports/la_gran_manzana_the_road_ahead_for_new_york_citys_latino_community/).



committed to continue to serve as a connector and resource for workers and businesses in New York City, helping them access government support and providing those in need with educational, technical, and social assistance programs.

The policy proposals in *La Gran Manzana: The Road Ahead for New York City's Latino Community* reflect the best thinking about the most significant challenges facing our communities. They build not just on the wisdom of our most respected nonprofit community leaders but also their decades of on-the-ground experience serving those in need.

Therefore, the City Council can support working families and create a brighter future for all of New York City by:

### **Boosting Job Quality & Growth**

Boosting job quality and growth by enforcing and expanding current laws and policies such as \$15 minimum wage, pay equity and anti-harassment laws; increasing safe and healthy workplace protections like Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) on the city level and enforcing accountability with an eye towards emergency management planning for the future; expanding the city's retirement savings program to informal and nonprofit workers and creating a benefits package (such as health, dental, vision, life, and disability insurance) for informal workers to purchase; supporting the enforcement and expansion of paid family leave policies; and streamlining the system to ensure enforcement of the NYC Fair Chance Act by creating a straightforward and accessible system for job seekers to submit complaints if they feel that a potential employer violated the NYC Fair Chance Act and providing community education on how to submit complaints.

Educating the community via know your rights campaigns to ensure workers are informed is critically important. Also critical is designing and implementing culturally competent know your rights campaign to ensure that workers are informed about city minimum wage and benefits, including paid sick leave; ensuring that employers are informed about restrictions on hiring practices regarding women, including inquiring about marital status, salary history, family planning, number of children, etc.; and launching Know Your Rights education programs for women re-entering the workforce due to family leave / pandemic unemployment.

Increasing flexible funding opportunities for community-based workforce development programs that provide wraparound services to meet the increased need and demand for workforce services from both New Yorkers and employers, especially small businesses, is critically important. This includes properly funding adult literacy (English for Speakers of Other Languages, Adult Basic Education, High School Equivalency), and immigration services to help address the needs of immigrant job seekers; encouraging grantees of city-funded workforce development programs to work with all community members, regardless of criminal history; increasing training and opportunities for "green jobs", jobs requiring digital skills, and remote employment options; increasing access to childcare and encourage employers and the City to provide childcare for children of employees; and addressing transportation issues that affect employment prospects.



Leveraging Workforce 1 resources are also vital for access to opportunities. The community would benefit greatly from requiring Workforce1 centers to build and maintain relationships with local community-based organizations (CBOs) via “meet and greet” sessions to foster information sharing about programs and opportunities available to neighborhood residents; expanding Workforce1 center training offerings to focus on resilient employment opportunities; fostering collaboration between Workforce1 centers and CBOs to provide workforce trainings; and formalizing a process by which Workforce1 centers work with CBOs to find job placement for clients enrolled with workforce development programs and increase hires of neighborhood residents.

### **Supporting Small Business**

Supporting small businesses through educational workshops that continue to expand entrepreneurial training to foster growth amongst Latino and immigrant small business owners and CEOs is crucial for entrepreneurs hard hit by the pandemic. Some ways to accomplish this include providing financial education for efficient financial management and capacity building for small business operations; educating small business owners about the importance of credit, opportunities to expand their line of credit, and have confidence with financial institutions; creating microlending opportunities for small business owners and increasing training and access to financial technology; expanding access to services for harder hit communities considering the pandemic; encouraging and supporting women-led enterprises by investing in the cooperative movement; and increasing trainings and opportunities for women entrepreneurs, especially home-based businesses, and remote opportunities.

Additionally, creating specialized campaigns to support local businesses in Latino and immigrant neighborhoods require targeted attention. This can be achieved by encouraging tourism in East Harlem, Upper Manhattan and the outer boroughs intentionally focusing on Latino and immigrant neighborhoods in all five boroughs; analyzing the equitable distribution of tourism marketing funds to Latino and immigrant communities especially the “New York is Back” campaign; launching ‘shop local’ campaigns in Latino and immigrant neighborhoods; implementing culturally competent outreach and education campaigns to inform small business owners about various forms of access to capital and ensure equitable access to capital for small to medium enterprises; and launching a Know Your Rights campaign to educate small business employers and employees about gender and LGBTQ regulations regarding non-discriminatory hiring practices. Equally important is launching special projects for small businesses like developing physical, safe marketplaces for informal vending; and uplifting and strengthening informal businesses by decriminalizing street vending.

Investing in our community and its future health and success is an investment in New York City. It is precisely because of the central role that Latinos play in both the recovery and future of our City that we respectfully ask you to make the bold and necessary investments in our community. Investing in our community and its future health and success is an investment in New York City.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you.



## **NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic**

Thank you to the City Council, Council Members Fariás and Brewer, and the Committees on Economic Development and Oversight & Investigations for their attention to the future of workforce development and its role in our city's recovery from the pandemic. Hot Bread Kitchen is one of the many workforce organizations and NYCETC members requesting the City's partnership and investment in our work to aid in New York City's economic recovery through our programs. We create economic opportunity for immigrant women and women of color through job skills training and placement, food business incubation, and an ecosystem of human services support in New York City. Hot Bread Kitchen's community of 450+ members primarily consists of women of color (98%), immigrants (76%), and parents with children under the age of 18 (63%). More than 66% are non-native English speakers, and 89% were unemployed and below the poverty threshold before enrolling in our program. We have incubated over 250 small businesses and MWBEs owned by a diverse group of culinary entrepreneurs. Our goal is to put people in roles and build businesses that not only facilitate financial mobility and opportunities for personal growth, but that also allow them to contribute to New York's overall vitality.

Hot Bread Kitchen offers our program participants, who we call members, a number of programs in order to reach economic mobility.

1. Workforce Training
  - a. Culinary Training: 4-week training in culinary fundamentals and professional readiness, then direct job placement and customized retention services.
  - b. Facility management: Training in facility fundamentals through a curriculum partnership with the International Facility Management Association.
2. Job Placement: We place all workforce training graduates into a high-quality job through our 80+ employer partners.
3. Bridge Training: We offer digital literacy and English as a Learned Language programs as primers for our workforce training, fueled by the belief that these essential skills are critical to sustained economic mobility.
4. Human Services: As part of our support and retention program and our community-building efforts, we ensure that members have access to any assistance they need to start work confidently and safely—be it childcare, food security, or housing. Critical components of this approach include addressing structural and institutional barriers that limit our members' success, which include partnering with community-based social service providers and expanding our service offerings to include childcare support.

5. Quality Job Initiative: In partnership with the Good Jobs Institute, we are working with a cohort of small businesses to create practical frameworks to recruit and retain talent, promoting a systems change approach and better employment practices within the food industry.

This year, Hot Bread Kitchen is embarking on a three-year strategic plan to put 1,000 breadwinners on a path to living wage employment and bring our programs to all five boroughs by 2024. Our plan will meet women wherever they are with the comprehensive, customized support they need to succeed, while also contributing to New York City's recovery by investing in immigrant women and women of color, who are the bedrock of essential industries like food and hospitality.

**Our strategic plan is based on pillars aligned with the Mayor's priorities for recovery:** childcare, bridge programming and wrap-around services, and collaboration with community and workforce partners. Despite the demonstrated need for these services and the Mayor's stated intention to invest in them, we have found it just as challenging to secure heavily siloed public funding as we have to secure funding from the private sector. Hot Bread Kitchen's holistic workforce programs do not fit neatly into categories for government funding, so we do not receive much—despite the fact that we badly need it.

We are grateful to have received funding from the City Council previously, which supported our last strategic growth plan to quadruple the number of women we trained and placed in good food jobs annually. With the Council's investment, we were able to surpass that goal and were graduating over 100 women per year before the pandemic. **We are seeking the Council's support again in FY23** for this new plan to support our members, our industry, and our city in coming out of the pandemic stronger than before. But for our membership to grow and for Hot Bread Kitchen to truly contribute to a sustainable and equitable future for New York City, our programs require additional—and more accessible—resources. Our program team has diligently collected data on our membership and outcomes and is currently seeking collaborative partners with whom we can exchange data and resources; it is our goal to support universal data access for workforce programs, however we cannot do that currently due to limited existing financial support for the endeavor. Hot Bread Kitchen has useful impact data that we are ready, willing, and eager to share with the City—but how are we to do this without resources? The fact is, we are doing it with no budget because we know this work matters—as so many other workforce providers are—and we are confident we could scale it if we had necessary resources. We need consolidated investment from the City to expand our programs and contribute to New York's recovery and to continue supporting our members.

The onset of COVID-19 disproportionately affected our members, who are among the most economically vulnerable New Yorkers; immigrant women and Black, Latino, and Asian communities experienced steeper declines in employment than most. In early 2020, Hot Bread Kitchen pivoted to provide emergency financial support to our members and transformed our programming to stay engaged with our members throughout the crisis. Our team connected with members on a weekly basis to understand how the pandemic was affecting them. Businesses owned by people of color, like the ones we support—which also tend to employ more diverse workforces—were sharply impacted. The pandemic has highlighted how food industry jobs can fall short for workers, the fragility of small food businesses, and

the urgent need for equitable economic recovery. Many low-wage workers were unprepared for a financial crisis—especially women, who contribute significantly to their families’ financial security and are overrepresented in low-paid jobs. New York City’s crisis-level shortage of affordable childcare is an additional impediment to women’s economic mobility and our city’s economic recovery. According to 2020 data from Citizens Committee for Children of New York, 93% of NYC families with young children cannot afford center-based care for their infants and toddlers.

Our solution to these needs is to significantly expand and refine our job training and placement programs, and provide childcare as a support to our members. Our approach—which includes bridge programming, culinary and facility management workforce training, job placement and retention services, small food business support, a Quality Jobs Initiative to support better business practices, financial coaching, social service referrals, and more—enables successful, long-term job placement for our members, providing them with economic mobility and financial security. Our ultimate vision is to connect as many of New York City’s immigrant women and women of color as possible to opportunities to thrive, utilizing the food industry as a catalyst. This is a vision we know the City Council, the Mayor’s Office, and the greater NYC workforce system share with us—so we are asking to work together, and to have the resources we need, to achieve it.



**Testimony of Joseph T. McDonald III  
Co-President of the Institute for Career Development**

**Before a Joint Hearing on “The City’s Evolving Workforce Development Plans in  
the Wake of the Pandemic”**

**Held by the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and  
Oversight & Investigations**

**March 21, 2022**

Good afternoon. I’m Joseph McDonald, Co-President of the Institute for Career Development.

ICD has been a leader in the field of vocational rehabilitation since its founding in 1917, most recently specializing in no-cost vocational evaluation, career coaching and planning, certification-based training programs, internships, and job placement services for individuals with disabilities.

Our work supporting the employment needs of hundreds of thousands of adults with disabilities has revealed a staggering commonality—the vast majority suffer decades of cascading hardships like poverty, food insecurity, unstable housing, substance abuse, and involvement with the criminal justice system long before making it to ICD to begin their vocational rehabilitation. The lasting impacts of these experiences are all too often

the issues that continue to stand in the way of their employment successes even after receiving robust career readiness and training services.

The late Desmond Tutu once famously said, “There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in.” With the help of the renowned nonprofit consulting firm The Bridgespan Group, ICD has done just that. We have spent a year exploring where and why the hardships that our adult participants face begin. Our findings have revealed a gap in services that students with disabilities fall through when attempting to transition from high school to adulthood that, if filled, could enhance career opportunities earlier in life.

## **Need**

According to the NYC Department of Education, of the over one million students in the New York City school system, 20.8% are students with disabilities. A 2020 Youth Transition Report by the Institute for Educational Leadership shows that the dropout rate of students with disabilities is almost triple (12%) the rate of students without disabilities (5%). Even for those who graduate, only 31% find and persist in post-secondary programs like vocational training or college. Furthermore, the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment found that in 2021, only 46.7% of youth with disabilities (ages 20-24) were employed as compared to 72% of youth without disabilities.

School transition supports, which are provided by law for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans, focus almost exclusively on the in-school experience and getting to graduation. On the other hand, acquiring support outside of the

school requires individual outreach, awareness, assessment, self-advocacy, and perseverance. The gap between these two systems leaves youth with disabilities disproportionately vulnerable to involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice system, poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, and more. And the potential for these negative outcomes is compounded for youth who face additional barriers and bias surrounding income, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more.

### **New Program**

To address the gap in services that students with disabilities face, ICD worked in consultation with The Bridgespan Group to develop a long-term, early career readiness pilot program called “School to Success.” Launching in September 2022, ICD’s “School to Success” pilot program will aid youth with disabilities as they transition from school to adulthood and career success through higher education or vocational training/credentialing programs. The program will bring dedicated student coaches/counselors called Navigators directly into NYC public schools to provide holistic services to all students with IEPs or 504 plans within partner schools.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this program are to provide holistic assessment of youth and family needs, increase coordination and use of existing services, raise parental/caregiver expectation of youth, engage youth in work-based learning experiences and real-world work experiences (employment, internship, or job shadowing), and improve self-sufficiency, financial planning, and educational progress.

ICD will accomplish these objectives by providing five key services:

- 1) Intake, assessment, and evaluation to engage students in developing a career plan
- 2) Long-term coaching and psychosocial support to help students develop resiliency
- 3) Parental/caregiver education and involvement to deepen student support networks
- 4) Connection to a constellation of vetted service providers including vocational training schools, college counselors and accessibility offices, and job placement professionals
- 5) Group-based workshops, including interview preparation, resume-building, work readiness/soft skills training, benefits and financial counseling, and digital literacy

### **Outcomes**

In the first year of the program, ICD will serve 200 students across two partner schools. Of those 200, we anticipate 30% will participate in a work experience (employment, internship, or job shadowing), 20% will complete career-oriented volunteer hours, 25% will be referred to and monitored for successful engagement with vetted a college access center, and 25% will be referred to and monitored for successful engagement with vetted vocational training programs, including ICD's existing certification-based training verticals In Information Technology, Facilities Management, and Human Services.

Our first partner school is Discovery High School, located in the Kingsbridge Heights section of The Bronx. Our second partner school (pending MOU signature) will be in an underserved neighborhood in either Queens or Brooklyn.

## **Evaluation**

To track and measure the outcomes and overall impact of the “School to Success” program, ICD is capitalizing on our new Salesforce database to collect a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data on enrolled students, program activities, and outcome metrics including number of work experiences (employment, internship, or job shadowing); completed career-oriented volunteer hours; referrals to college access centers; and referrals to vocational training programs.

## **Sustainability**

To ensure the sustainability of the program and its impact, ICD has developed a braided funding model with a diverse portfolio of revenue sources, including private philanthropy, government, and fee-for-service from partners. While ICD is making the initial investments to launch this pilot program, scaling its impact to help more New Yorkers with disabilities will depend on growing support from a network of partners including government agencies.

For that reason, we are pleased to testify today in support of NYCETC’s recommendation that a permanent Workforce Development Fund be created to provide sustainable long-term funding for employment and training programs. Two elements of this proposal are crucial: first, that it be permanent; and second, that it be flexible and provide support across agencies and initiatives.

For the work that we do to be most effective, its components cannot be siloed. Yet all too often City funding is unnecessarily difficult to apply for and restrictive in its application.

The result is that service providers lose time and money working to weave together various strands of funding for different purposes from different sources to be able to provide services in a holistic way that sees, serves, and preserves the dignity of people with disabilities seeking employment.

A permanent centralized Workforce Development Fund that recognizes the need to support holistic career services for young people with disabilities would be an incredible economic engine for New York City. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph T. McDonald III". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Joseph T. McDonald III

Co-President

# Lincoln Center

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**Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.  
FY23 Preliminary Budget Testimony  
Economic Development Committee  
March 16, 2022**

Chair Fariás and members of the Committee,

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, one of the 34 members of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), thanks you and your staffs for your attention to driving an equitable economic recovery of which the city's arts and cultural institutions are essential. Collectively, our organizations – big and small – need your support to adequately play our essential role in its recovery.

Founded 60 years ago as a place to center interdisciplinary arts within the daily life of New Yorkers, Lincoln Center is home to 11 independently operated non-profit arts organizations. Complementing the on-campus presence are partnerships across the city with local schools, senior centers, libraries, and community-based organizations. Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts presents free and low-cost programming and education for all New Yorkers.

The pandemic devastated the arts while challenging us to think differently about the use of our spaces and the role of live performance within the ecosystem of a healthy city. Over the last two years, we at Lincoln Center strengthened our commitment to being an arts and civic hub presenting socially engaged artistic works while meeting community needs through hosting blood drives with the New York Blood Center, food distributions with the Food Bank for New York City, and NYC Mobile Vaccine buses. At a time of high unemployment and inarguably one of the most challenging times for cultural organizations across the City, Lincoln Center accelerated its timeline for the new David Geffen Hall to get New Yorkers back to work by supporting 6,000 jobs, awarding 43% of construction contracts to MWBEs and developing a workforce development program with Turner Construction that put 30 local residents on track for full-time union positions. David Geffen Hall is a symbol of New York City's resilience.

Across campus we have taken steps to reopen. After nearly two years of being closed, the Rubenstein Atrium has reopened with an even more robust slate of free public programming for the spring season, and open hours that welcome New Yorkers to safely meet, study, and relax. We have brought back dance nights, youth partnerships and global artists. Our organizations need city support to adjust to the impacts of the pandemic and bring our city back safely. New York City's arts and cultural organizations are critical to supporting a healthy ecosystem and to the economic resilience of the city.

Last summer, Restart Stages – a free outdoor summer-long festival to bring back the arts - featured 400+ activations across 10 stages, including in Damrosch Park and partnerships with 70+ community-based organizations. Over 250,000 people attended free performances, including dance, music, spoken word, and public art installations from diverse artists. Progress has been made in diversify the audiences coming to Lincoln Center with more than 50% of the Atrium audience identifying as BIPOC and 28% from households with incomes below \$75,000. Our public art installation, THE GREEN, drew in over 100,000 visitors, of which 23% said it was their first-time visiting Lincoln Center.

We remain dedicated to serving our community and our city in any way we can. Over the last year, we hosted 16 public school graduations livestreamed across 40 countries, blood donations at the Atrium saved nearly 1,500 lives, food distributions served nearly 5,000 individuals, and 275 people were vaccinated against COVID on the Lincoln Center campus. We know that ticket affordability remains a barrier for many. This year we are piloting a Choose What You Pay ticketing model with a \$5 minimum for American Songbook, featuring all global music, to help ensure performances are within reach for families.

Lincoln Center is a proud member of the CIG, a diverse coalition of cultural organizations across the five boroughs with a distinct private-public partnership with the City of New York and a commitment to serving all New Yorkers. Collectively, we provide access to nearly 24 million New Yorkers and tourists annually, with 4.2 million free visits and 1.5 million K-12 student visitors. City support remains vital for the survival and renaissance of the arts in New York City.

We ask that you increase support for the arts to help rebound the economy and restore New York City's vibrant tourism sector. More than half of New York City's international visitors visit a museum or gallery and one in four attend a live performance. The creative sector accounts for 13% of the city's total economic output. Pre-pandemic, one out of every eight dollars of economic activity in the city could be traced directly or indirectly to the sector, according to the 2019 Creative Economy Report by the Comptroller. Visitors come to New York City for the arts and culture.

City funding allows the cultural sector to fulfill its role within a healthy democracy as spaces for convening, learning, healing, supporting, and uplifting all New Yorkers across every neighborhood district regardless of race, age, ability, creed, gender, or socioeconomic status. The pandemic showed us the dangers of social isolation. At no time has investment in the arts been more critical for the well-being of our city. We ask for increased investments to the Cultural Affairs budget to support the arts within tourism and for a restoration of all Council Initiatives, including Autism Awareness, Geriatric Mental Health, Arts as a Catalyst for Change, CASA, and SU-CASA, which deliver the arts directly to New Yorkers.

We understand the current financial constraints and know that the key to reopening the city is to support the arts and cultural sector. We are a critical part of the reopening ecosystem that drives tourism and economic activity.

Lincoln Center is committed to New York City as a place where everyone is welcome and where they belong, and we continue to engage as lifelong learners to do better as a world-class arts, education, and civic hub for all.

We look forward to being in dialogue with the Council and the Administration about that request in detail.

Please email me at [edesiervo@lincolncenter.org](mailto:edesiervo@lincolncenter.org) if you have questions or would like to hear more about Lincoln Center's plans.

Respectfully submitted,

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**Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council  
Committees on Economic Development and Oversight & Investigations  
March 21, 2022**

by  
**Michael Roberts**  
**Executive Director, Comprehensive Youth Development**

**Oversight Topic**

The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic

**Recommendation**

**Expand the income requirement for working poor youth and adults to enter State and City funded workforce training programs.**

I want to thank the New York City Council Committee on Economic Development and the Committee on Oversight and Investigation for inviting me to testify. My testimony will focus on expanding the income level for eligibility for working poor youth and families for city funded workforce training program in order to meet the needs of employers who are creating job pipelines

**The Problem – Equity and Access**

**Due to income restrictions set forth by The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) and applied by New York State and New York City, the majority of working poor youth and families are not able to take advantage of state and city training programs to fulfill the job creation pipelines industries have set with the City and State.**

What is poverty? Who is poor? Defining poverty is not a technical term but rather a social construct, which historically has meant a lack of access to resources to provide the necessities for life: food, clean water, shelter, and clothing. In today's modern life those resources can be extended to include healthcare, education, transportation, and broadband. However, because the calculation of these goods and services varies greatly from region to region, state to state, city to city, there is no one dollar figure which can calculate the true threshold for poverty. What is known though is that the federal government's definition of the poverty line is far too low, impacting the effectiveness of antipoverty programs and restricting equity and access to those who could benefit from workforce programs.

### **What Makes a Workforce Training Program Effective?**

An effective workforce development training program includes modules that focus on job readiness, résumé and interview preparation, soft skill development, and skills-based technical training. However, beyond a lack of workplace skills, many job seekers experience barriers that interfere with their ability to acquire or retain employment.<sup>1</sup> These barriers are often many and complex, including but not limited to a lack of access to stable housing, childcare, increased food security, access to reliable transportation, and medical care including mental health support. The severity and complexity of these barriers often deepen along with the decline in household income.

The very low threshold of the LLSIL more accurately reflects a population historically defined as those in “deep poverty”, a population which experiences elevated degrees of barriers to employment. The impact of these impediments can be reduced through a connection to supportive services, but the severe depth of these barriers many times make completion of a rigorous multi-week skills-based training program unlikely<sup>2</sup>. Although skills-based training as a workforce development service sits within the nexus of the social safety net, it is not interchangeable with traditional social services. What is critical here is that barring marginal social service support, students participating in workforce training require a baseline degree of stability to accomplish completion. At the LLSIL level of deep poverty, substantial sustained and intensive interventions that cut across multiple programmatic silos are required prior to entry into a training program.

### **History of Poverty Measures**

The current Federal Poverty Measure was developed in the mid-1960s by Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security Administration<sup>3</sup>. As there were no minimum standards of basic consumption items such as housing, clothing, transportation, Ms. Orshansky based her poverty threshold on the only standardized budget that existed at the time, food. In the early 1960s it was estimated that a family spent one-third of their expenses on food. The poverty threshold was therefore drawn at 3 times the minimum food plan budget, based on the U.S. Department Agriculture’s estimate in 1964. To this day, this calculation remains; only making adjustments for inflation. In 2021 the poverty threshold for a family four, two adults and two children, has been set at \$26,500. See *Table 1, 2021 Federal Poverty Guidelines, p. 5*.

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<sup>1</sup> [Best Practices in Workforce Development Case Management | UnidosUS](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Addressing Deep and Persistent Poverty: A Framework for Philanthropic Planning and Investment \(urban.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/news/2020/03/05/481314/poverty-line-matters-isnt-capturing-everyone/>

### **History and Role of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2015 was enacted to increase coordination amongst the federal government's workforce development and related programs. Through WIOA, the federal government allocates significant money to states for employment and training programs which meet WIOA mandated guidelines. In Program Year 2021, WIOA allotted \$918,577,000 to WIOA approved Youth Activities alone. \$56,398,671 of which was allotted to the State of New York<sup>4</sup>.

The goal of WIOA is to improve the quality of the workforce through occupational skills attainment by participants, thereby reducing welfare dependency and enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of the nation. This is achieved through serving low-skilled unemployed and underemployed individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria based on the specific WIOA program and targeted population. Focusing primarily on out-of-school youth, WIOA Title 1 Youth Program eligibility guidelines state that programs must consider age, barriers to employment, school enrollment status, and income of participants.

As stated above, there is no universally accepted measure of poverty therefore leading to different U.S. government agencies determining the poverty threshold for different targeted populations using slightly different calculations. Using the federal poverty threshold as a starting point, WIOA determines income eligibility, using the Lower Living Standard Income Level Guidelines (LLSIL).<sup>5</sup> See *Tables 2 and 5, Poverty Rates and Thresholds, p. 5*.

### **Our Perspective: Comprehensive Youth Development's Youth Workforce Experience**

In 2013 Comprehensive Youth Development partnered with JobsFirstNYC, CUNY, and healthcare employers to develop the CYD Career Academy to prepare young people to work as Medical Assistants. We piloted the program with funding from private foundations. During the initial three-year pilot, there was no income qualification for entry. Most of the Career Academy students came from our schools and underserved communities and qualified for free lunch or full financial aid. This gave us a large and diverse pool of working poor young people to select from who, after assessment, had the circumstances and skills that allowed them to be successful in a rigorous workforce training program.

In 2016, we were awarded a WIOA contract through DYCD. Over the past six years, we have seen substantial changes in our retention and completion rates – we've gone from 80% completion in the pilot cohorts to 60% in the publicly-funded cohorts. The program is the same, and the staff is the same. What is different is that the criteria set by the city for income

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/27/2021-08725/program-year-py-2021-workforce-innovation-and-opportunity-act-wioa-allotments-py-2021-wagner-peyser>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/llsil>

eligibility and barriers cuts out a large portion of working poor families and youth who are ready to take advantage of the training model and had a good chance of completing.

We have learned that people whose income is below a very low poverty level have a huge range of barriers that preclude them from being able to successfully participate in and complete a rigorous workforce training program. These barriers cannot be successfully addressed in a short preparatory period, which prevents participants from being able to complete a rigorous workforce program. Many need housing stability, drug or alcohol rehabilitation, educational remediation, or mental health services that cannot be addressed in an eight-week Bridge program to prepare them for occupational training. It has become apparent that these poverty requirements stopped us from being able to include working poor clients who would most benefit from the training and who could enter a career that could change or break the cycle of poverty for their families in the future.

#### **A Possible Solution: Increasing Eligibility for Working Poor Youth**

Understanding that the federal poverty threshold is an insufficient measure, The New York City Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity has developed a more robust and accurate threshold for poverty. The NYC Government Poverty threshold accounts for the New York City housing costs that are substantially higher than the national average, as well as commuting, medical, and childcare costs. See *Tables 3 and 4, NYC Gov Poverty Thresholds for 2018, p. 6.*

In addition, the Office of Economic Opportunity has also defined the *Near Poverty rate*, defined as the share of the population living under 150% of the NYC Government Poverty Threshold. This includes all people living in poverty and those at risk of falling into poverty.

Using the most recent data collected in 2018, 16.1% of New Yorkers were living in poverty using the Official U.S. Poverty Threshold, 19.1% using the NYC Poverty Threshold, and 41.3% living near poverty. This margin of 25 percentage points represents the number of people who are “nearly poor” but unable to receive WIOA-funded training because they are not “poor enough”. **If we expand our definition of poverty, WIOA-funded workforce programs would be able to serve significantly more individuals, many of whom are precariously close to sliding deeper into poverty.**

**Table 1- 2021 Federal Poverty Guidelines**

PY2020	Poverty Guidelines
FAMILY SIZE	Yearly Income
1	\$12,880
2	\$17,420
3	\$21,960
4	\$26,500
5	\$31,040
6	\$35,580

**Table 2 – Family of 4 (2 Children, 2 Adults) Poverty Rates & Thresholds**

Source: [20 poverty measure report \(nyc.gov\)](#)

Table 1.1

**NYCgov and U.S. Official Poverty Rates and Thresholds, New York City, 2017-2018**

	2017	2018
<b>Poverty Rates (%)</b>		
NYCgov Poverty	19.3	19.1
NYCgov Near Poverty	44.1	<b>41.3</b>
U.S. Official Poverty	16.6	16.1
<b>Thresholds (\$)</b>		
NYCgov Poverty	\$33,562	\$35,044
U.S. Official	\$24,858	\$25,465

**Table 3 – NYC Gov Poverty Thresholds for 2018**

Source: [20 poverty measure report \(nyc.gov\)](#)

**NYCgov Poverty Thresholds for 2018 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years**

Size of Family Unit	Number of Children							
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
One person	\$16,242							
Two people	\$22,901	\$24,509						
Three people	\$35,044	\$30,845	\$29,096					
Four people	\$42,862	\$39,037	\$35,044	\$33,392				
Five people	\$50,108	\$46,545	\$42,862	\$39,037	\$37,462			
Six people	\$56,929	\$53,565	\$50,108	\$46,545	\$42,862	\$41,350		
Seven people	\$63,416	\$60,210	\$56,929	\$53,565	\$50,108	\$46,545	\$45,088	
Eight people	\$69,629	\$66,554	\$63,416	\$60,210	\$56,929	\$53,565	\$50,108	\$48,696

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census and NYC Opportunity calculations from Tables B.1 and B.2.

**Table 4 - NYC Gov Near-Poverty Thresholds for 2018**

Source: [20 poverty measure report \(nyc.gov\)](#)

**NYCgov Near Poverty Thresholds, 2018**

Near Poverty = 150% of NYCgov Poverty Threshold

Size of Family Unit	Number of Children							
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
One person	\$24,363							
Two people	\$34,352	\$36,764						
Three people	\$52,566	\$46,268	\$43,644					
Four people	\$64,293	\$58,556	\$52,566	\$50,088				
Five people	\$75,162	\$69,818	\$64,293	\$58,556	\$56,193			
Six people	\$85,394	\$80,348	\$75,162	\$69,818	\$64,293	\$62,025		
Seven people	\$95,124	\$90,315	\$85,394	\$80,348	\$75,162	\$69,818	\$67,632	
Eight people	\$104,444	\$99,831	\$95,124	\$90,315	\$85,394	\$80,348	\$75,162	\$73,044

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census and NYC Opportunity calculations from Tables B.1 and B.2.



**Table 5 – Lower Living Standard Income Level Guidelines**

Source: [NYCgovPoverty2020 Appendix B.pdf](#)

PY2020	HIGHEST OF 70% OF THE LOWER LIVING STANDARD INCOME LEVEL GUIDELINES OR POVERTY INCOME GUIDELINES, 2020 NYC	
FAMILY SIZE	Yearly Income	Six Month Income
1	<b>\$12,760</b>	<b>\$6,380</b>
2	<b>\$19,870</b>	<b>\$9,935</b>
3	<b>\$27,273</b>	<b>\$13,637</b>
4	<b>\$33,669</b>	<b>\$16,835</b>
5	<b>\$39,730</b>	<b>\$19,865</b>
6	<b>\$46,472</b>	<b>\$23,236</b>
7	<b>\$53,214</b>	<b>\$26,607</b>
8	<b>\$59,956</b>	<b>\$29,978</b>

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## GERIATRICS CAREER DEVELOPMENT (GCD)



Testimony of  
Lashima Goshine, The New Jewish Home, Manhattan

Presented Before The Committee on Economic Development &  
The Committee on Oversight and Investigations

Monday, March 21, 2022

Oversight Hearing – The City’s Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic

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Good afternoon, my name is Lashima Goshine. On behalf of Jewish Home Lifecare, Manhattan—or The New Jewish Home, Manhattan—I want to thank you, Chairs Farias and Brewer and the members of the Committee on Economic Development and Committee on Oversight and Investigations, for the opportunity to testify today. I work at The New Jewish Home as a program manager for its Geriatrics Career Development (GCD) high school program—a workforce development training program for underserved young people in New York City.

I love my job, because GCD transforms lives—both the lives of young people and older adults. We do this by creating a pipeline of highly trained health care workers. The New York City Council is already a part of this transformation through discretionary funding allocations over the past several years both from individual council members and through a Speaker’s Initiative. We are so grateful to you and hope to count on your continued catalytic support.

GCD exists to bridge the gap between geriatric care job openings and underserved young people. Our population is aging. We do not have enough health care workers to care for our older adults. The pandemic has only amplified the staffing shortage. It is now a full-blown crisis. Healthcare jobs are the fastest growing jobs. Meanwhile, young people are disconnected from school and work at alarmingly high rates.

GCD prepares young people for living wage jobs in health care. GCD provides hands-on experience, paid internships, mentorship, job training, and courses in healthcare certifications aligned with the needs of the health care industry.

Each year GCD serves approximately 275 participants ages 14-24 at no cost to them. GCD currently partners with 10 under-resourced public high schools to serve students in grades 10-12 through a three-year after-school/out-of-school-time program. GCD also trains young adults ages 18-24 who are not in school and unemployed through a 3-month full-time program.

Of our nearly 1,000 program graduates since 2006, 91% are currently employed, enrolled in post-secondary programs or both. GCD also builds pathways to college for hundreds of young people.



As a 2010 graduate from GCD's high school program, I can personally attest to its power. I graduated from Marie Curie High School on time—99% of GCD participants graduate high school ON TIME. As a GCD graduate, I was a certified nursing assistant (CNA) right out of high school. Starting pay for CNAs in New York City is \$19 per hour and a full-time CNA's annual salary can reach \$37,000. (\$8K more a year than full-time minimum wage earners).

Working as a CNA caring for older adults enabled me to do important work while also broadening my understanding of career opportunities in the health care field. Today, I have a master's in public health.

Committed to social justice, racial equity, and economic mobility, GCD is a bold workforce solution to address the growing shortage of geriatric care workers and provide good jobs for New York City's underserved young people. GCD has already changed so many lives. Yet, we're only scratching the surface of what we can do. Increased support will make it possible to expand GCD to provide transformative opportunities to more young people in New York City. Thank you for hearing my testimony! I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Testimony before the  
New York City Council Committee on Economic Development  
and Committee on Oversight and Investigations**

**Oversight—The City’s Evolving Workforce Development Plans  
In the Wake of the Pandemic  
March 21, 2022**

**James A. Parrott, PhD  
Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies  
Center for New York City Affairs at The New School**

Good afternoon Chairpersons Farias and Brewer and members of the Economic Development and Oversight and Investigations committees. My name is James Parrott, Director of Economic and Fiscal Policies at the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as this hearing.

While there are several laudable proposals in the Mayor’s recently announced Rebuild, Renew, and Reinvent blueprint, I am concerned given the scale and nature of the pandemic’s continuing labor market dislocations and the fact that the City has never before mounted the sort of active labor market intervention that is needed to get many more people back to work in good jobs.

As noted in a report we released last week, in the pre-pandemic decade 2010-2020, the combination of the doubling of the minimum wage, the establishment of other wage standards, and strong employment growth (full employment during the last two years of that decade) fostered the strongest economic gains for the lowest-paid half of all workers in New York City in at least a half century. After steadily rising for three decades (1980-2010), income inequality flattened and edged down in the last decade.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Parrott, *Full Employment and Raising Wages: New York City’s Twin Economic Challenges in Emerging from the Pandemic*, Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, March 16, 2022.

<http://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/full-employment-and-raising-wages-new-york-citys-twin-economic-challenges-in-emerging-from-the-pandemic>

Still, even at the beginning of 2020 before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, stark income inequalities continued in New York City, and significant pay, health, and other disparities existed across racial and ethnic groups. Pre-pandemic, from a third to half of the city's households of color had incomes that were insufficient to provide for basic family budget needs, and wealth inequality is more pronounced than income disparities.

The pandemic's extreme lopsided economic impacts have exacerbated these disparities. Low-paid workers of color have borne more than three-fourths of the job dislocation. While the recently revised payroll employment numbers released by the State Labor Department raised the city's employment level by 100,000, New York City's total employment level is still down 317,000 from February 2020. This 6.8 percent pandemic jobs deficit is three times the nation's.

Several industries that typically employ mostly workers of color and lower-paid workers still have job levels 10 to 37 percent lower than pre-pandemic, including hotels (-37 percent), arts, entertainment and recreation (-26 percent), full service restaurants (-23 percent), personal and laundry services (-19 percent), construction (-18 percent), building services (-14 percent), child care (-14 percent), and retail and wholesale trade (-10 percent).

The unemployment rate in New York City is twice the national average, and locally, the unemployment rate for Blacks is more than twice that for whites. The under-employment rate for Latinx and Black workers is in the 15-17 percent range. The size of the labor force has dropped considerably and the labor force participation rate is 1.7 percentage points below where it was in the first quarter of 2020. Unemployment rates are particularly high for young and older workers.

Many low-wage workers have been permanently dislocated from their jobs and thousands of women have left the labor force to care for family members through the pandemic. Temporary cash assistance rolls have nearly doubled since September 2021 when all Federal unemployment assistance ended. Hardships, and poverty, are likely to increase further in 2022 with the expiration of enhanced Federal Child Tax Credits at the end of last year. Medicaid rolls have grown by more than 20 percent during the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Achieving a return to full employment in New York City within the next two years is a tall order considering that the pandemic has put many small employers out of business. It will require an active labor market policy to respond to a changing economy. That policy should maximize the ability of the city's workers to fill the broad range of job openings that will emerge as the economy recovers, growth resumes in the tech and health care sectors, and as investments increase in infrastructure, clean energy, and climate resiliency.

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<sup>2</sup> See Figure 22 in the CNYCA *Twin Challenges* report.

Many jobs are changing in response to health concerns, worker preferences, technology, and the ways that businesses are adapting to pandemic-wrought changes. Our mid-January policy brief laid out recommendations for how the City and State could combine wage subsidies on a targeted basis to workers and small businesses. We also urged greater investment in workforce retraining programs to enable more residents to trade up to better jobs, including to fill openings in tech-related fields, health care, and other businesses that could grow provided they have a skilled workforce. Wider use of apprenticeship programs can play a critical role in boosting the earnings potential for non-college-bound young adults and meeting business needs for higher-skilled workers.<sup>3</sup>

An active labor market policy is needed that will entail outreach to dislocated workers and a capacity to assess their abilities and aspirations and identify what training and supports are needed. An active labor market policy also requires a capacity to consult employers regarding their skill needs, identify and respond to labor market problems and developments, and anticipate emerging labor market opportunities. It requires a high degree of consultation at a local and regional level among employers, community colleges, workforce development providers, labor union training programs, labor market researchers, and government officials. Such consultation does not currently exist in New York that focuses on meeting the current unemployment crisis.

In the wake of past economic downturns, the City and the State have taken a laissez faire approach to the labor market with the unfortunate result that unemployment rates for workers of color stayed high for several years. The City needs an active labor market policy to bring down unemployment and to ensure that more workers share in the benefits of a recovering economy.

The City and the State should act to raise pay for underpaid care workers, support labor protections and standards for gig and other low-paid workers, adjust the minimum wage for inflation and productivity growth, and extend prevailing wage standards. To address the glaring 20-35 percent compensation disparities between a predominantly women of color nonprofit human services workforce and similar public sector workers, the City should adopt a prevailing wage approach for these workers and establish a living wage floor for all nonprofessional contract workers.<sup>4</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.

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<sup>3</sup> See James A. Parrott, *New York State's Unprecedented Covid-19 Unemployment Crisis Requires a Comprehensive, Immediate Active Labor Market Response*, Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, January 13, 2022, <http://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/new-york-states-unprecedented-covid-19-unemployment-crisis-requires-a-comprehensive-immediate-active-labor-market-response>

<sup>4</sup> James A. Parrott and L.K. Moe, *The Case of Ending Poverty Wages For New York City's Human Services Workers*, Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, March 2022.

**TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK CITY EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COALITION  
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL JOINT OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE CITY'S  
EVOLVING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THE WAKE OF THE PANDEMIC**

**March 21, 2022**

Good morning to you, Chair Farías, Chair Brewer and your fellow Council members.

My name is Annie Garneva, and I am the Interim CEO for the New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC). Founded in 1997, we are the largest city-based workforce development association in the country, with over 200 members providing jobs for over 600,000 New Yorkers, many of whom you'll hear from today.

Our members create jobs and connect underserved people — New Yorkers of color, New Yorkers with multiple barriers to employment, New Yorkers of low or moderate incomes and many others. Our Coalition prioritizes supporting job seekers who have been left out of the economic recovery due to systemic and historic marginalization and connecting them to opportunities so they can support their families and help their communities thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony about where our city's workforce ecosystem stands today after two years of the pandemic's impacts on New Yorkers, as well as years of overall disinvestment, and what we can do to invest in better supporting workers across the five boroughs.

The economy has been undergoing rapid and dramatic changes bolstered by automation and the pandemic's push toward a digital landscape, requiring workers to remain lifelong learners and design their own career pathways, thus making traditional ways of training and educating obsolete. Today's labor market demands that workers constantly upgrade their skills and learn new ones in order to remain competitive. Unfortunately, the current underfunded and siloed workforce development system in New York City — made up of hundreds of programs and organizations, administered across 21 City agencies, and financed through a disjointed combination of public and private funders — is woefully inadequate in supporting the growing demand and complexity of training, upskilling and finding employment for millions of New Yorkers, both workers and businesses owners. Our workforce service providers and advocates have done a herculean job of supporting New Yorkers, especially in the face of increased need over the last 2 years, and have been willing and eager to collaborate with the City for years. Unfortunately, we previously have not seen the action and new investments that we feel are necessary to make progress for New Yorkers, particularly around the de Blasio administration's Career Pathways and New York Works economic and workforce development strategies.

However, earlier this month, the Adams administration laid out a vision for a long-term approach that invests in people and helps break down barriers to ensure more equitable opportunities for all New Yorkers. We commend and thank the administration for making workforce development a key pillar of its economic recovery plan, and for integrating an active equity lens centered on local communities.

For too long, the workforce ecosystem has been woefully underfunded despite persistent employment barriers and low access to economic opportunities — especially for New Yorkers from communities that have been historically marginalized and disinvested. We urge the new administration to both build upon the positive initiatives of the previous administration - such as industry partnerships and the call for bridge and pre-apprenticeship programs - and learn from its mistakes and missed opportunities. We urge the Adams administration and new Council to create and share a detailed implementation plan, timeline and robust new

investments in re-employment, training, upskilling, adult literacy programs, as well as the necessary wraparound and system capacity building supports that service providers require in order to pivot, scale up and build new programming.

The pandemic was challenging on many workforce providers in the City, with 96 percent of organizations experiencing decreased revenue due to reduced government, foundational, and donor funding and increased demand from both job seekers and employers, especially small businesses. At its worst, unemployment rates were high across the board for men and women, with men of color experiencing joblessness at nearly twice that of white men.

Parallel to this there has been increased difficulty in delivering workforce services due to new digital infrastructure and curriculum needs, as well as a major need for resources for program development and innovation to upgrade and build new programs reflective of the sectors that are strong in Covid economy and their particular new skill needs. Our colleagues at WPTI will share in depth recommendations on the capacity building needs of the workforce field, including digital infrastructure and upskilling, which we wholeheartedly support.

Today, we urge the City to build on the Adams administration's economic blueprint and reimagine a more inclusive economy by committing to making bold investments in our workforce and laying out a specific implementation timeline. The COVID-19 pandemic and our ongoing recovery made it clear that our current systems are poorly designed and fail to meet the urgent need first created by an inequitable economic system and now exacerbated by the pandemic. We must recognize people as the source of economic prosperity and growth and work on creating a new talent-driven model that opens access to career opportunities for all workers.

Most immediately, the City can boost our economic recovery by **investing \$250 million for pandemic recovery re-employment programs**. Through wage subsidies and training aligned to in-demand sectors — including healthcare and life sciences, tech, clean energy and sustainability, retail and hospitality — New York City can better support millions of workers who remain unemployed and businesses still struggling to hire. Wage subsidies provide immediate economic benefits to jobseekers and employers. The City should target these benefits specifically to small businesses, minority and women-owned business enterprises, and businesses that operate in the poorest neighborhoods.

Again, the blueprint laid out by the Adams administration is an encouraging start, but we need to do more if our recovery is to leave no New Yorker behind.

First, the City has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to drive inclusive sector growth and build a future-focused economy. The administration must make clear how jobs, diversity and local hiring will be measured, and we urge the administration to develop a blueprint for building talent pipelines and connecting employers to workforce service providers. We applaud the administration's proposal to connect existing tech jobs to local communities, but it must create a robust plan to measure success and track who gets those jobs.

Second, the City must connect New Yorkers to in-demand skills and quality jobs. We thank the administration for its commitment to cultivating a comprehensive, long-term approach that invests in people from early education to adulthood, but look forward to seeing an implementation plan guided by partnership with training providers and associated new funding. To begin, the City needs to **invest \$100 million annually in new funding toward talent development programs**, including \$20 million for bridge and pre-apprenticeship programs to ensure that the workforce system is more accessible.

Third, the City must **expand 360 degree wraparound services** - including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment - that empower clients, provide security, and increase the ability to learn and earn. This includes increased stipends and wage subsidies to low-income workforce program participants, especially those in skills training programs, in order to allow them to focus on learning and not worrying about having enough money to feed themselves and pay rent.

Lastly, we have made clear that new investments for innovation and flexibility are needed across the ecosystem, and we recommend the creation of **a permanent Workforce Development Fund** that provides sustainable, long-term funding for employment and training programs across all agencies and initiatives. This fund should be made up of dedicated investments from one, subsidies enacted through city and state economic development corporations and two, the city's employer community through a new financial commitment or tax levy, which would require the City to work with the State.

Again, while some of these ideas are commendably reflected in the new Blueprint, we are eager to see specific timelines and investments associated with them in the coming weeks.

We look forward to working with you all to put our city on a path to an inclusive and equitable economic recovery where every New Yorker can thrive.

Thank you.



**2022 Committees on Economic Development and Investigations Oversight Hearing  
March 21st at 1 PM**

Testimony of Dr. Williams,  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT)

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Darlene Williams, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). Thank you to the Council Members on the Committees of Economic Development and Investigations for the invitation to advocate for investments that would better support and position workforce development providers in creating a more equitable economic recovery moving forward.

Since 1983, OBT's mission has been to navigate New Yorkers to pathways of sustainable careers through job training, education, and employment placement assistance with a host of wraparound services. Our vision is to strengthen the workforce by serving as a bridge to economic opportunity for individuals and families in underserved communities, which is critical for economic recovery during these unprecedented times. With programming that ranges from high school equivalency to industry-certified training programs for high school graduates, we focus on meeting individuals "where they are" and work with them to meet their goals.

Despite increasing demands from city government for workforce development services to aid in the economic recovery efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, our sector experienced numerous budget cuts and diminishing resources. OBT received \$300,000 less than our previous fiscal years, hindering our ability to effectively navigate customized programs to our participants who were already facing barriers prior to gaining employment, such as needing to learn and master new skills, access to language services, childcare, and more.

Furthermore, the pandemic exacerbated a legacy of racial, health, and environmental issues affecting our participants. One of the most significant impacts the budget shortfalls had on our Sunset Park Programs was the reduction to only two full-time counselors for 120 individuals. We serve a high-needs population that includes parents, students with disabilities, and homeless youth. Losing counselors created jarring mental health concerns, especially with our younger participants who needed support from increased intimate partner violence, food insecurity, and job losses due to COVID-19.

**Along with New York City Employment & Training Coalition's (NYCETC) call for a \$250M investment in key workforce development initiatives, we strongly believe that we can recover from the last few years and empower New Yorkers to succeed in the future with your investment in the following:**

**Sunset Park**

882 3rd Avenue  
Suite 10-10NE, Unit 18  
Brooklyn, NY 11232  
Tel: 718-369-0303  
Fax: 718-369-1518

**Innovation Lab**

87 35th Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11232  
Tel. 718-801-8970

**Bushwick**

25 Thornton Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11206  
Tel: 718-387-1600  
Fax: 718-387-5005

**Jamaica**

168-25 Jamaica Avenue  
Suite 202  
Jamaica, NY 11432  
Tel: 718-526-2984



- 1. Increase New Yorkers' ability to successfully skill and upskill by providing wraparound support.** As seen in our participants, success in our programs is contributed by a host of wraparound services we provide. To best serve their needs, we need to better understand critical barriers to workforce participation such as childcare, supplemental or replacement income, food insecurity, transportation, broadband, and tech hardware.
- 2. Improve how we evaluate and use our program data to streamline service delivery.** Nonprofit organizations play a vital role in building healthy communities by providing critical services that contribute to economic stability and mobility. Researching trends, understanding market sectors, and the needs of the communities are critical components for effective service delivery. Tracking and monitoring community and program data will streamline our customized service processes.
- 3. Expand our ability to offer New Yorkers sector-based programs** in healthcare, technology, masonry, childcare, climate-based careers, and more through programmatic training that is blended, flexible, and industry certified. With your support, we can build a pipeline of talent for innovative and upcoming industries that have all shown growth in recent years.
- 4. Empower our participants with an array of technology.** Invest in digital literacy programs because basic technological skills are essential for all workers. The transition to hybrid and remote ways of working across sectors has further demonstrated the need to address the digital divide. We need investments that empower our participants to use an array of technologies in a fluent manner.

New York needs bold investments from its local government that supports people getting sustainable employment that pays a dignified salary with solid benefits. It is our hope and expectation that the City Council and leadership reflect the values of equity and justice in a budget that places youth, immigrants, and those who have endured the most economic hardship since 2020 at the center of this budget.

Thank you on behalf of everyone at Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow for giving us this platform to testify about our needs for investment that support New York's ability to thrive in a post-COVID economy. With your support, we look forward to building our partnership so that together we can provide our participants with the opportunity for a better tomorrow.

Best regards,



**Dr. Darlene Williams**  
**President & CEO**  
**Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow**

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**March 21, 2022**

**Committee on Economic Development jointly with the Committee on Oversight and Investigations**

Chair Farías, Chair Brewer and Members of the NYC Council -

Good afternoon and thank you Chair Farías, Chair Brewer, and members of the committees for hosting this important hearing today.

My name is Bryan Lozano and I am here representing Per Scholas. At Per Scholas we advance economic equity through rigorous training for careers in tech while connecting our graduates to leading businesses in need of talent. Over the past 25 years, we have trained over 8,000 New Yorkers and partnered with over 500 businesses. This year we plan on training over 800 New Yorkers, the largest in our history.

Through the support of the city, the city council, and our funders, Per Scholas has been able to make our programs more accessible for New Yorkers by providing virtual options of our courses. Since the start of the pandemic, we've trained nearly 1,000 learners in our remote options and mobilized our resources to provide technology - including laptops and internet access - to those in need. However, the digital divide remains, with nearly 40% of Bronx Residents lacking access to the internet. More needs to be done to ensure that all adults who are seeking employment can access training programs remotely.

Along with remote courses, we've implemented a new satellite model where we partner with community-based organizations (CBO) in neighborhoods and regions that have been underinvested in career-ready workforce programming. We built classrooms at our partner sites and worked with them to recruit locally in the neighborhoods they serve. We launched two successful pilot programs with Commonpoint Queens and the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island. Our program on Staten Island was the first of its kind, creating new opportunities for further investment for residents of the borough. Through this model, Per Scholas has already seen a five times increase in enrollment on Staten Island. We're excited to launch more satellite classrooms with the Stanley Isaacs Center and Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation later this year and it will be the first time in our history that Per Scholas will provide training in all five boroughs. This new model utilizes our broader workforce ecosystem and allows us to reach a wider geography, eliminate onerous commutes, and make our instruction accessible to those for whom childcare, employment, or other obligations constrain their flexibility.

Our scale across all five boroughs is reflective of the high demand for tech skills in the workforce. Over 915 of our graduates have obtained employment during the pandemic, earning a starting salary of \$21/hr (equating to a 4x increase in their average pre-training wages).

However, there's more work to be done. The New York City unemployment rate is nearly double the national average as recently as December 2021.

New Yorkers need programs like Per Scholas now more than ever. Over the past few years, we have developed multiple pathways into our programs, including bridge training with Goodwill and a new cybersecurity bridge program we're launching later this year. The result of these bridge programs is hundreds of New Yorkers enrolling in our training who otherwise would not have qualified. These pathways have crucially increased access to our program but there is still significant demand to be met. We know that for every 1 seat we provide in our programs, we have 6 interested applicants.

Per Scholas is a proud member of the NYC Employment & Training Coalition and I encourage the Council to adopt the Coalition's recommendations including creating a permanent workforce development funding, committing to \$100 million annually in new funding toward talent development programs such as bridge programs, and expand the city's pool of federal recovery dollars to invest in New York's workforce development system.

Workforce organizations are vital to the economic recovery of the city and together we can put New Yorkers back to work.

Thank you.

Testimony to the City Council Committee on Economic Development and Committee on Oversight and Investigations

March 21, 2022

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Rebecca Lurie  
Community and Worker Ownership Project  
CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies  
[rebecca.lurie@slu.cuny.edu](mailto:rebecca.lurie@slu.cuny.edu)

Greetings Chairs. What an honor it is to testify before you, Council Member Farias, in your new role as Chair of the Committee on Economic Development. And Council Member Brewer, welcome back to the council and thank you for your role as Chair of Committee on Oversight and Investigations. Certainly your long tenure in our city's political life will see great efficacy with this young, BIPOC and female dominated new City Council.

Thank you both for this time and attention to our workforce development approaches toward meaningful and just economic development in our city.

I run a program at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, Community and Worker Ownership Project. Here we promote, teach, learn and network for skills in economic development that are centered in community engagement, worker power and deep democracy. We inspire and cultivate strategies for a cooperative economy where solidarity and care are held as primary values.

I came to this work through a pathway of running workforce development programs, first at the Carpenter's Union apprenticeship school. Understanding from that lens how the premier model was deeply embedded in industry, I did not first see workforce training as a broader social issue, but from the perspective of the industry's needs. As it has evolved, workforce development and its public funding streams ask that we work to solve deeper social problems of generational injustices and unequal distribution of resources. This is a challenge that requires the consideration of multiple stakeholders. Hence we see the silos.

Council Member Brewer referred to 70 programs and 21 agencies. I want to identify the fact that beyond the short order requirements of our workforce development programming obligated to show results in narrow time frames of quarterly reporting, we have multiple means in our city to support businesses that take a longer view, not least but most important here, straight up economic development with real estate and land use. And also, far from least, our public education system of Pre-K to Higher Ed. These longer term needs and pipelines

cannot be ignored when our workforce development programs are asked to fill the gaps in immediate terms. We can unwrap the silos of the workforce programs and apply the perspective of business development and education with a vision of a greening and caring economy with the added tool of a job guarantee.

Working with certified apprenticeship programs in the building trades I learned that worker training is a need for business development. Even a cost for them. Businesses with certified apprenticeships have that baked into the job descriptions, with the training requirements and pay and titles that advance from novice to expert while staying within one united industry.

I sit on the EDC's Off Shore Wind Advisory Council and see that we need to understand that long term changes in the market will not answer the short term demands of the workforce development means of operating. We will need to engage young children today for them to be the maintainers of the green economy that starts now and will be ours forever into the future generations. A job guarantee, giving people a paycheck now, so they can earn while they learn and innovate for a green economy that can raise up both economic and environmental justice. It places public dollars at the hands of industry for work pay to say, clearly, " the government will support you to develop this work with these people."

When I was running a culinary and baking program with city, state and federal funding we were advised to NOT accept people who had aspirations to start a business. We were told the outcomes of business start up would not let us meet our milestones.

Self-employment is one of the largest growing aspects of work. Worker cooperatives is a model when workers are also the owners and work collaboratively to run the companies they are part of. We need to incorporate cooperative business training to serve the fact that self employment may well mean folks will start companies with support from our workforce programs.

Small businesses and even especially micro businesses for BIPOC entrepreneurs need broadening support. The training for a worker and the training for a business owner needs to be blended. Workers going through training for a particular job skill can also learn about how these businesses work so people who move through our training programs can consider a level of self-employment where they could create a few good jobs in their small companies or moving up in the firm where they land towards business management and even cooperative business management as traditional business owners retire or move on.

Supporting business development with social goals should be a fundamental aspect of city supported economic development. Indeed, moving towards a greening and caring economy, with a commitment to justice and repairing old harms, it should be a requirement to any support our economic development dollars places into the system.

The apprenticeship model pays people as they enter work. Apprenticing for the job skills and the business skills for the company can strengthen peoples' play in the economy while preparing them to enter and helping them advance. As we need to build out the sectors that will outlast us, (green infrastructure and care) we can support the development through deep investments. This can be achieved with a financing model where the business is rewarded with a wage subsidy or a paid job guarantee that will subsidize workers' pay as beginners develop in their position and options to become cooperative owners are presented.

We live in a capitalist economy with extreme threats and challenges to our city's ecology and people's well being. Living through these challenging times we can envision a day will come when our economy will be cooperative and the concerns for people and the planet will rise over extracted profits. To that end, we can bring these values into every nook and cranny now as we all aim for a living economy that can allow the most marginalized to have their full agency, leaving no one behind and having room for everyone in the economic life of our city.

Thank you.



**Valerie Payne**  
**Executive Director, Rebuilding Together NYC<sup>1</sup>**

**Testimony Submitted to the New York City Council**  
**Committees on Economic Development and Oversight & Investigations**  
**March 21, 2022**

**Oversight Topic:** The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic

**Recommendation:** Focus Economic Development Efforts on the Development of Local Talent to Create an Inclusive NYC Economy

Good Afternoon Chairs Farias and Brewer, I want to thank the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and the Committee on Oversight and Investigation for inviting me to testify. My name is Valerie Payne, I am the Executive Director of Rebuilding Together NYC (RTNYC) and Executive Committee member of NYCETC. RTNYC provides critical home repair and accessibility modifications for low-income homeowners, reskills individuals for careers in construction and provides opportunities for new Yorkers to revitalize community spaces. I agree with the points many of my colleagues have made today and whole heartedly support the New York City Employment and Training Coalition's recommendations.

My testimony will focus on the critical importance of rethinking how we better support local talent development, and make it the center of our economic development efforts.

1. **The problem: Too many New Yorkers are not being supported to compete in our own labor market.** Labor market data shows that too many New Yorkers, who are at a disadvantage compared to US-born job seekers from other states. Blacks and Latinx – those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic – born in NY suffer the most. They show even deeper disparities compared to those from other states, particularly in relation to landing in occupations that provide family-supporting wages and benefits.
2. **The solution: We need a new public agenda that intentionally connects economic and workforce development:** Our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity that we cannot afford to lose. We must use this to fuel our efforts to position local talent as NYC's competitive economic advantage.

<sup>1</sup>Rebuilding Together NYC's (RTNYC) mission is to repair homes, rebuild lives, and revitalize communities. We are dedicated to the preservation of affordable housing and the cultivation of a skilled workforce. By improving the safety and health of homes and preserving a family asset, reskilling individuals for careers in construction, and revitalizing community spaces, RTNYC is strengthening New York City neighborhoods for a more equitable future.

- a. A network of strong workforce development organizations, members of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition.

### **Detailed Recommendations**

1. Commit \$250 million to launching an extensive re-employment program to support the millions of New Yorkers who remain unemployed, the business that continue to struggle to hire, and the growing sectors that are developing in the pandemic.
  - a. This includes wage and training subsidies as well as wraparound and retention supports, which are notoriously under-funded or not at all.
  - b. This also ideally includes a strong City employer engagement strategy including internship and hiring commitments, curriculum development, program development, career exploration, and prioritizing small businesses.
2. Fund new program innovation and development with at least \$100 million in new funding per year:
  - a. \$100 million for workforce development programs with \$20 million for bridge and pre-apprenticeship programs including wraparound supports.
  - b. Help organizations develop “next gen” workforce programs and talent pipelines by providing new dedicated funding to pivot and/or scale up existing programs and build new programs entirely.

Rebuilding Together NYC’s Careers in Construction program is part of the solution, alongside NEW and Pathways to Apprenticeship, as mentioned by Chair Brewer. We provide a pre-apprenticeship certificate training designed to re-skill individuals for careers in construction, and serves those hardest hit by the pandemic. We recruit and serve students from all five boroughs. After the pandemic forced us all to quarantine in March 2020, we were able to re-launch three months later providing our training on-line and continued to graduate over 85% of those enrolled. Our program is free and graduates earn a financial stipend or incentive. In the past three years, we placed almost 200 individuals in apprenticeships with over 10 construction unions including the Laborers, Painters, and Electrical union in addition to those listed below.

We also partner with construction companies who sponsor our graduates into union apprenticeships including Turner Construction and Monadnock Construction, a prominent developer of affordable housing. Graduates earn a variety of industry-recognized and required certifications including OSHA 30, Site Safety Training, Flagger, and Scaffold. Demand for our program is high. We are developing a shorter program for individuals currently employed in non-union construction jobs who are interested in becoming an apprentice and joining one of the trades.

We are incredibly grateful to have received support from DYCD, NYCHA, and from former City Council members, Mark Treyger and Alicka Ampry Samuel. With additional support and funds, we could easily triple our efforts to re-skill and re-employ many more New Yorkers in incredibly well-paying apprenticeships with career advancement opportunities, continuing education opportunities and amazing benefits. The construction industry is scaling up and on track again to add jobs over the coming years. According to the [New York Building Congress](#), in 2021 construction employment was at the lowest level since 2014 however in 2023 the employment level is projected to be at its “third-highest peak since at least 1995.”

I appreciate the remarks made earlier by Councilmember Brewer regarding training more electricians and plumbers, and Eli’s comment on scaling up what works. Rebuilding Together NYC is positioned to be a strong contributor to rebuild NYC and re-employ New Yorkers. Thank you.

<b>RTNYC Partner Unions</b>
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Local 1010 - Highways, Roads, Parks
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Local 79 - Mason Tenders/Laborers
Local 1 - Brick Layers
Local 1 - Plumbers
DC9 - Allied Trades
DC16 - Cement & Concrete
Local 12 - Heat & Frost
Local 10 - Roofers
Local 731 - Excavators
Local 3 - Electrical



## **TESTIMONY**

Preliminary Budget Hearing:

“New York City’s Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:  
Worker Cooperatives- An Essential Model for Business Sustainability and Recovery”

### **Presented to**

New York City Council Joint hearing, Committee on Economic Development  
and Committee on Oversight and Investigations

Hon. Gale Brewer, Chair

Hon. Amanda Farias, Chair

Monday March 21, 2022

### **Prepared By:**

Catherine Murcek, Worker-Owner  
Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective

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Thank you Chair Brewer, Chair Farias, and Honorable Council Members of the Committees on Economic Development and Oversight and Investigations for the opportunity to testify. My name is Catherine Murcek and I am a worker owner at Samamkaya Yoga Back Care & Scoliosis Collective and an elected member of the Advocacy Council coordinated by the NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives (NYCNoWC), a partner organization of the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) and a member of the United for Small Business NYC (USBnyc) coalition. Our community of democratic worker-run businesses is predominantly led by women and people of color, representing communities across the five boroughs and a wide array of industries from cleaning to catering, manufacturing, media, childcare, and more. Thanks to the City Council's support over the last seven years, we have the largest network of cooperatives in the U.S! I am testifying today to ask you to please **continue to support the great work of WCBDI** as a crucial component of a just recovery, and as another part of those efforts I also urge you to **ramp up efforts to regulate commercial rents** for small businesses across the city as we struggle to recover from the pandemic.

My business, Samamkaya Yoga, is a very special, small studio focusing on the therapeutic applications of yoga for people with a wide range of body types and ability levels, including those with Scoliosis, herniated discs, a fused spine, and we even have an adaptive yoga class for folks with more limiting disabilities. The business formed just over 7 years ago when a group of instructors highly skilled in therapeutic yoga for back issues were feeling exploited and underappreciated at another studio and decided to start their own worker cooperative, which is, in other words, a small business that is co-owned and democratically-run by its workers.

Because of the then newly funded citywide initiative, WCBDI, the founding members were able to get legal support from NYCNoWC to form the business as an LLC cooperative with an Operating Agreement and a system for sharing profit based on the number of hours worked at the studio. One of the founders was fortunately able to provide a zero interest personal loan to the business to build out the small studio space in Chelsea to the very specific requirements of alignment-focused therapeutic yoga. In addition, through NYCNoWC's Principle 6 program the studio has over the years been able to have business cards printed for all faculty members by Radix Media cooperative. We have also been grateful to have attended a number of workshops and business coaching sessions over the years from NYCNoWC, BOCnet, and CAMBA.

Joining Samamkaya as a worker-owner 6 years ago has been a truly transformative experience for me. In an industry where most yoga instructors are accustomed to being 1099 Independent contractors, to be able to have a vote in decisions about the business that will affect its members was really empowering. In addition, because cooperatives are built on certain principles including concern for community, one worker one vote, and training and education for its members, it has felt incredibly rewarding to be part of a values-driven business. Cooperatives allow the freedom to get involved in different aspects of the business that one might not have thought of before; to learn and grow in new ways. And, every member has incentive for the business to do well because every member is financially and energetically invested in the business and will do what it takes to see the business succeed.

This became even more crystal clear for me at this time two years ago when so many non-essential businesses like mine were forced to close their doors in order to prevent further spread of COVID-19. All our members snapped into action as much as they were able, divvying up the tremendous labor of researching different platforms we might use to switch to online offerings and different grants that might be available to help keep us afloat. We completely revamped our schedule, pay, and fee structures in an equitable way that would make it easier on the studio but also for the teachers who most needed to continue working due to ineligibility for unemployment; we worked together to find the best possible solution for both the business and its workers.

We were hopeful when SBS announced the Employee Retention Grant and Small Business Continuity Loan, but we were not eligible for the grant and we really could not consider taking on more debt at this time since we still have a large debt from when we first opened. Through the **Commercial Lease Assistance program (CLA)** we were able to set up a legal consultation to advise us on our commercial lease and how we might approach negotiations with our landlord, which fortunately went well, and we hope you will continue to fund that program. Even though we were one of the fortunate few small businesses I know of to have been able to negotiate our rent, we did so on the condition that we renew our lease for another 10 years during which period our rent will gradually rise to “market rate”. Unfortunately, this still makes our future uncertain because we have very limited opportunities for growing our classes due to the small capacity of our space. A fair and just system of **commercial rent stabilization** would allow small businesses like mine to feel secure enough to plan for the future.

Even though we have experienced significant losses in revenue, I know that we fared better than many other yoga studio and wellness businesses--of which so many have sadly closed for good--in a large part because of our democratic structure. Other traditionally-run studios I know of have reduced teachers' pay and number of classes, let go of teachers, or even closed their doors indefinitely. Because of the resiliency of the cooperative model, and because of the wonderful support offered by the WCBDI partner organizations and the cooperative ecosystem, I am more convinced than ever that cooperative businesses are a necessary and quintessential part of a just economic recovery.

I urge the City council to continue **to support and build on the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, enhancing its funding to \$5.01 million** so that all the incredible partner organizations involved can continue providing legal services, education, and technical assistance to our growing community of locally-driven community-focused businesses. The way that the initiative partners coordinate and collaborate with each other is groundbreaking and shows a real commitment to economic democracy within development in addition to empowering small businesses through workplace democracy. They have continued uninterrupted services throughout the pandemic and in many cases added services that were outside their original plans, like workshops to help worker owners respond to the crisis, information about available resources, and support for loan and grant applications. They also make sure that worker owners have “a seat at the table” when making important decisions

through the leadership skill building program of NYCNoWC's Advocacy Council, which gives worker-owners the training and support they need to bring their voices to policy spaces.

There is so much we are eager to explore with the City Council to help ensure that the workers in our small business communities aren't just surviving, but thriving. Most worker cooperatives in our community have not been able to **access affordable commercial spaces**, and we would deeply appreciate assistance with that. We have a goal of creating cooperative co-working hubs in every borough but for now, we lack the resources and capacity to make that a reality. Ideally these hubs would be developed using the **Community Land Trust** model in order to foster community control and economic democracy. Cooperatives are also eager to take on **procurement opportunities** with city agencies, but have had trouble accessing city contracts due to a variety of factors. In addition, **access to direct financing** has been a major barrier for many co-ops to access capital to start up their business or to help it grow. For now, the best option for most co-op startups is through the innovative model used by The Working World, a CDFI and a partner in the WCBDI which supports every one of its loan recipients with education and technical assistance to help them succeed, and only accepts repayment once the business is profitable, but their resources are limited and they need your support. Please refer to [www.workercoop.nyc](http://www.workercoop.nyc) for more info about our municipal policy priorities.

Further, in coalition with and in support of other groups, I urge you to support long term community-driven efforts toward a just recovery by supporting the following. 1) City council needs to take **commercial rent stabilization** seriously, in order to protect our broader small business community from future continued closures and displacement in the aftermath of the pandemic. Rents were already too high before the pandemic began, so we need long-term solutions to prevent further displacement of small businesses across the city. Landlords should not be allowed to quadruple a small business's rent in order to get the highest bidder into a commercial space, but there is currently no law preventing that. A fair and just system of commercial rent stabilization would help to level the playing field, making much needed spaces more attainable for a more diverse array of small businesses, which contribute to the cultural fabric of our great city. 2) Preserve permanent funding for the **Commercial Lease Assistance program** in the budget. 3) Please consider **a new round of grant opportunities--as opposed to loans--with expanded eligibility and language access to allow for more types of small businesses** to get back on their feet on the long road to economic recovery. 4) **Fund community based organizations engaged in merchant organizing and outreach** to give small businesses across the city the voice they deserve. 5) Finally, **increase accessibility to SBS services for Limited English Proficiency immigrant small business owners** by expanding language capacity within the agency.

In conclusion, democratic workplaces in our most vulnerable communities help protect against wealth extraction by building up community wealth, the capacity for community control, and by protecting jobs and wages. My cooperative community members and I urge you to continue to support WCBDI and build on all efforts that prioritize equity--and protect NYC's women, immigrants, and POC small business workers from displacement--to ensure a just economic recovery. Thank you for your work and for reading my testimony.



**Testimony of Sanctuary for Families  
Submitted to the New York City Council, Committee on Economic Development  
Chair, Council Member Amanda Farías  
(Hearing on March 21, 2022)**

Good afternoon. I am Sarah Hayes, Deputy Director of the Economic Empowerment Program at Sanctuary for Families, New York City's largest provider of services exclusively for survivors of domestic violence and related forms of gender-based violence. We thank the Committee on Economic Development and its Chair, Council Member Amanda Farías, for the opportunity to speak today. Sanctuary is immensely grateful for the City Council's steadfast support of our work over the years, and its unwavering commitment to addressing issues facing gender-based violence survivors.

When former Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the Career Pathways initiative in late 2014, we were thrilled. His Jobs for New Yorkers Task Force literally spoke our language, calling for “an unprecedented full-system shift toward a Career Pathways model.” The Career Pathways report noted how the City's workforce development funds were overwhelmingly “allocated to programs that connect jobseekers to entry-level positions with low wages and limited advancement prospects,” while only a small percentage “supports training programs that can provide skills that lead to career-track jobs with opportunities for advancement.”

After four years running a pioneering career training program for domestic violence survivors with virtually no public funding, we finally felt like we were being heard. And yet, since the landmark Career Pathways report in 2014—and even in the wake of an October 2019 Comptroller's [report](#) identifying domestic violence as the leading cause of family homelessness in NYC<sup>1</sup>—no RFP has been released identifying domestic violence survivors as a priority population for workforce funding. The City Council and some of its individual members have allocated a few small discretionary grants to EEP, and the program was awarded a substantial 3-year grant from the Manhattan District Attorney's Criminal Justice Investment Initiative several years ago, which has now expired. However, many appeals to the administration for systemic funding of this work have gone unanswered.

The Economic Empowerment Program (EEP) helps clients break down barriers that have long kept the door to the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy closed for poor women. Its 4-month Career Readiness Training Program delivers advanced office technology training leading to nationally recognized, stackable certifications in MS Office Suite; along with structured English and math literacy training. During COVID-19, EEP transformed its trainings for virtual delivery, and, since March 2020, has provided over 200 participants with new laptops, hotspots, and internet service plans to facilitate participation—bridging the digital divide.

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<sup>1</sup> The report noted that in FY2018, “domestic violence accounted for 41% of the family population entering shelter—the single largest cause of homelessness and a 44% increase in five years.”

Overall, in the past decade, EEP has delivered digital skills training to 1,150 women, with 950 graduates to date and over 550 attaining jobs. Solid placement numbers, but it's the wage outcomes that really stand out: in the last three years, CRTP graduates have earned over \$12 million in aggregated wages. EEP clients have secured nearly 100 job placements in the past 14 months, with average salaries of over \$43,000. The program's first placements of early 2022 are averaging over \$55,000 salaries.

We know that women do remarkably well, and make up the majority of the workforce, in service-sector jobs ranging from healthcare, to technology, to finance and law. Helping them attain economic empowerment is a sound investment, particularly given that so many are single mothers bringing up the next generation of our City's children. Yet, for EEP, the only public funding opportunities are broad-based unemployed worker programs where we compete with larger, generalist workforce programs that offer a volume and cost-per-client that programs like EEP simply cannot.

This is particularly frustrating because for years, the City has made enormous investments in workforce funding for other, primarily male, populations: formerly incarcerated people, veterans, and non-custodial fathers. It's not a zero-sum game: all of these populations need and deserve support to achieve economic stability and independence. But the glaring lack of funding for women's workforce programs has been notable and remains hugely problematic. We hope that with this year's historic women-majority City Council, we can shine a light on this issue and try to rectify it.

We applaud the Committee on Economic Development for prioritizing this hearing early in the new term to assess progress on Career Pathways. Our sincere thanks to Chair Farías for centering this issue at a critical moment, as the city emerges from COVID and the opportunities for good, living-wage employment rapidly expand. My sincere thanks for the opportunity to testify today.

## **St. Nicks Alliance Written Testimony for March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 City Council Hearing**

### **Introduction**

St. Nicks Alliance has been serving North Brooklyn communities for over 45 years. Our Workforce Development Center supports over 1300 members of our community each year with Adult Education, Skills Training and Job Placement. Our population is 95% Black and Hispanic and un or underemployed.

### **Our Services**

St. Nicks Alliance Workforce has expanded our Skills Training Offerings for both Disconnected Youth and Adults. We trained & placed over 320 over the last 2 years across our Skills Training including Green Training (Construction, HVAC, Environmental Remediation, and Urban Greenscaping), Healthcare (HHA, PCT/CNA), Technology (Data Analytics and IT Help Desk Support), Financial Services, and Customer Service.

Our Skilled Build Construction Training boasts an 85% placement rate and a 21% wage growth rate after one year.

There has been high demand for our new Data Analytics, HVAC and Digital Literacy/Computer training programs. St. Nicks Alliance provides Workplace Success, Job Readiness, Transformational Coaching to all of our participants. We recently added Financial Counseling for interested participants. Our goal is to put all of our participants on a career pathway to economic stability and we provide monthly alumni engagement support post graduation.

### **St. Nicks Alliance supports NYCETC proposal for \$250 million Covid reemployment program with subsidized employment and employer engagement**

#### **How are Services can be Broadened with More Resources**

Increased investments in Digital Literacy for All, Internships and Stipends will help connect more North Brooklynite/ New Yorkers to good jobs.

### **St. Nicks Alliance would like to see NYC scale up support for internships, training stipends and digital literacy.**

#### Internships

Internships are a critical component of our young adult and adult Skills Training. There is limited funding currently for internships. With greater access to funding to support industry internships in technology and healthcare we are able to better prepare our participants to build a career pathway in the field. Without this work experience it makes entry into the career path more difficult. Our current DYCD funding only allows for 50% of our young adult participants to



get a paid internship. Internships beneficial to all young adults and many adults in training programs who need to build industry work experience.

### Training Stipends

All of St Nicks Alliance training is full-time. It can be a struggle for our trainees to complete the training and earn industry certifications with no income to support during the training. Funding to support a weekly stipend would greatly support our participant's ability to successfully complete the training, earn industry certifications and move onto building a career pathway. These stipends would allow St. Nicks Alliance to serve those hardest hit by the pandemic.

### Digital Literacy Training

Since the pandemic we have seen an increased need in digital literacy across all services at St. Nicks Alliance Workforce including Adult Education, Training, Job Readiness, and our Job Club direct employment program. The ability to use technology, write a resume, search for jobs, conduct an online interview, send a professional email goes across sectors and is a struggle for both the young adults and the adults we serve. Increased funding in this area will better prepare clients with the tools they need to be successful.

### **The Covid reemployment program must include:**

St. Nicks Alliance supports NYCETC proposal for \$250 million Covid reemployment program with subsidized employment and employer engagement

- Must include wage and training subsidies and wraparound supports, Internship and hiring commitments, curriculum development, program development, career exploration, and prioritizing small businesses.
- St. Nicks Alliance would like to see higher wages for entry level healthcare jobs (HHA, CNA, etc)

### **Fund new training program innovation and development with at least \$100 million in new funding per year**

St. Nicks Alliance supports NYCETC in its proposal for a minimum of \$100 million in funding to support workforce development training programs with \$20 million to bridge and pre-apprenticeship including wrap around supports.

St. Nicks Alliance wants to make sure that NYC is building pipelines to these opportunities and creating capacity. The city needs to drive coordination as we can't just build jobs and assume people are prepared/trained. This capacity is needed in growth sectors including Green Jobs

(Wind, Energy, Retrofitting), Technology, and Healthcare. As part of this effort we would like to see expanded Bridge training into these high demand sectors.

There is a critical need for Digital Literacy training that has become more apparent since the start of the pandemic along with the need for training stipends and paid internship. Our clients need More Wrap Around Support in such areas as childcare and transportation. Expanding stipends to low-income workforce program participants will ensure a high completion/success rate.

In summary, St. Nicks Alliance advocates for the city's increased support for Workforce Development training to better prepare our North Brooklyn community for jobs in high growth sectors.

**Larry Rothchild**

**Director of Workforce Development**

**St. Nicks Alliance**

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## CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY

Urban Resource Institute

March 21, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Amanda Farias, and members of the Committee on Economic Development.

First, thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony to the New City Council. My name is Amanda Eckhardt and I have the pleasure of serving as Chief Program Officer at Urban Resource Institute. I am thankful for the opportunity to submit testimony that shares insights from our front-line work at the Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Program that stands in alignment to the City's evolving workforce development plans in the wake of the pandemic.

This year Urban Resource Institute marks 42 years of serving with an unwavering dedication individuals and families impacted by homelessness including due to domestic violence – the leading reason for individuals and families entering homeless shelters in NYC<sup>1</sup>. In New York City alone, we offer close to 2,500 beds to folks and families on any given evening, and we are the largest provider of domestic violence shelter in the country. Each individual who enters one of our 19 going on 20 emergency or transitional shelters across the city has access to Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Center. So far this fiscal year to date we have served approximately 300 individuals in our Economic Empowerment Program and currently have a waitlist for services.

**In alignment with the NYCETC 2022 Policy Priorities and the Mayor's new Economic Blueprint**, we invite City Council as they ensure all New Yorkers' ability to access economic opportunity to stand with individuals who are homeless including those who have experienced domestic violence and their families.

**We are in support of passing Community Hiring legislation to ensure the City leverages its economic power and priorities its investments in communities that are historically marginalized and hardest hit by the health and economic toll of COVID-19.** At Urban Resource Institute, we operate programming that continues to evolve its innovative client centered and trauma-informed services with the understanding that homelessness including due to domestic violence can happen to anyone and yet its impact is compounded by systemic racism, sexism, and classism, and even more so during COVID-19 including in our current rebuilding phase. As an organization we understand that due to these factors, women of color, representing over 90% of our clients, having experienced homelessness due to domestic violence and its resulting economic abuse are more likely to experience significant barriers in accessing economic empowerment services and achieving economic justice and financial empowerment while receiving these services, which can result in negative long-term impacts throughout a survivor's and their children's lifetime. The proposed investments of the Community Hiring legislation will propel our work forward from an equity framework that is collective in focus.

**We are in support of the policy priority to invest in 360 degree wraparound services,** because those who we serve in URI's economic empowerment program say their primary barriers to economic independence are the lack of affordable childcare, transportation, documentation including work authorization, and access to sustainable housing. Case management, legal services, housing advocacy, and flexible funding including stipends that direct resources to address these barriers are instrumental to the success of individuals experiencing homelessness including due to domestic violence at URI.

An additional primary barrier to economic independence that clients in Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Program report is technology access, and therefore **we are in support of the policy priority to close the digital poverty gap** for workers and learners seeking workforce development services. This can be accomplished by expanding broadband access, providing devices to program participants, and providing technical assistance to workforce service providers like Urban Resource Institute and small businesses who hire participants.

**We are in support of the policy priority to commit \$100 million annual in new funding toward talent development programs** because the skills, talents, and career interests of those we serve in Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Program are incredibly diverse. As a result, the pathways to careers, particularly in in-demand industries are diverse and involve creative investment. Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Program has focused on developing partnerships with organizations that are in high growth industries, such as technology, finance, healthcare, culinary arts, and construction. Due to the severe impact of COVID 19 on the employment opportunities in hospitality, tourism, restaurant, and retail industries, our training and partnerships have shifted away from these industries. A few our partnerships that would benefit from further investment to support more individuals who've experienced homelessness including due to domestic violence include the Financial Management Association, offering finances and virtual internships opportunities, Andromeda Community Initiatives, which offers masonry certification, and virtual internships at the West Harlem Development Corporation.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to come before you today and talk about Urban Resource Institute's support of **the NYCETC 2022 Policy Priorities and the Mayor's new Economic Blueprint**, in alignment with our experiences serving individuals who are homeless including due to domestic violence in Urban Resource Institute's Economic Empowerment Program. We know that we can't do this work alone, and we remain committed to working alongside clients and each of you as we chart together the path forward to rebuild, renew, and reinvent our economic recovery in New York City.



## **3/21/22 Economic Development & Investigations Committee Hearing**

### **Written Testimony for: Evie Litwok, Executive Director and Founder of Witness to Mass Incarceration**

**Contact Info: [evie@witness tomassincarceration.org](mailto:evie@witness tomassincarceration.org), 347-304-7227**

My name is Evie Litwok and I am the executive director of Witness to Mass Incarceration, an organization whose constituents are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.

Prior to my incarceration, I had a 30-year work history with 12 years on Wall Street and 10 in the nonprofit world. After my release from prison, I didn't get a single response from the 200 job applications I submitted. There are far too many barriers to getting jobs and starting my own nonprofit was a better solution for me and for the hundreds of formerly incarcerated people who choose to open small businesses or services every day. They do this without access to capital and without a family inheritance.

When I was released from prison in 2014, I went to reentry nonprofits serving formerly incarcerated people and got a resume created, a few weeks of employment training, a practice interview, and was then given a few inappropriate job opportunities.

But cobbling together a resume, employment training, and an interview does not make you ready, nor does it give you a long-term job solution.

There are 30 years of reentry programs that have not reduced recidivism, nor have they resulted in long-term employment or housing. This one-size-fits-all transactional model does not work.

And if the same model is used for employment training, one size fits all training classes, then this too will fail because it is NOT designed to help each business with its unique DNA.

It is time for a new highly transformative model for employment. WITNESS is focused on creating an economic ecosystem for formerly incarcerated-led services and businesses that serves as a safety-net, using teams of people to mentor each other through the process. Our initiative is called ***The MAP Project***.

Formerly incarcerated people are flocking to small services and businesses for both survival and for passion. And it makes sense.

A report by the Association for Enterprise Opportunity revealed that Black business owners have a median net worth that is 12 times that of Black wage-earners. However, Black business owners earn only 1/10 the income of White business owners.

And just to understand, while white men owned 2,875,251 small businesses, black women-owned only own 41, 250. And for the disproportionate number of people of color being released from prison (“Black Americans are imprisoned at a rate that is roughly five times the rate of white Americans because during the present era of criminal justice reform, not enough emphasis has been focused on ending racial and ethnic disparities systemwide), their access to a family inheritance, business or capital is unlikely.

I built the WITNESS initiative ***The MAP Project*** because I knew that creating an infrastructure for formerly incarcerated-led services and businesses to become a network would foster community, support, and generate wealth.

I also knew we were an invisible community and if someone wanted to support us by buying things from us, there was no listing or place to find us. I created The MAP Project because I knew if there is an economic ecosystem that can support our formerly incarcerated-led services and businesses, and give them the resources and agency they need to grow, then this collective community would be a powerful economic and civic force.

***The MAP Project*** is a multi-year project which includes 6 Phases. We move from populating ***The MAP Project***, creating unique and individual profiles for each formerly incarcerated-led services or business owner, to promoting each business, taking the DNA of the business or services so we can determine the roadmap each one needs and be able to offer all services needed- be it financial or legal aid, or entrepreneurial mentorship needed to scale up each business.

We believe this model would reduce recidivism, help create long-term employment and housing. However, there is another caveat to this plan and that is - it needs to be run by people who understand the needs of this community- that is the members of the formerly incarcerated community themselves. We have a shared experience that makes us trusted messengers, family, community.

My parents are Holocaust survivors. They came here stateless, starving and with only 2.50 and a suitcase. I watched as they and their fellow survivors helped each other to rebuild their lives. They had a shared experience no one could understand and they built community because of their shared suffering.

The formerly incarcerated community has a shared life experience and when we meet each other, we are like family. Only we can understand what we went through and what we go through every day because of the trauma we endured from incarceration. Let us build our own infrastructure so that we allow not hundreds but thousands of small businesses to begin the process of creating wealth for this community.

I hope you set aside money for a project like this, which I believe can truly transform a community. We have already started.

In 2020, I built an online directory of FIP -led services and businesses. We have close to 100 listings from NYC. We have already begun to connect our FIP service and business leaders and began promoting them. Last summer at Baisley Pond Park, Queens, NY, 50 FIP-led services and businesses had tables to sell their cupcakes, mac and cheese, T-shirt designs, and catering. We plan to do this same event on July 17th this summer, at Baisley Pond Park. Our expectation is for double the vendors and double the crowd at District 28. We are already sending a message, we are not sitting around trying to figure out which bank to rob... we are building new lives.





**New York City Council Hearing  
Committee on Oversight and Investigations,  
jointly with the Committee on Economic Development**

**March 21, 2022 at 1:00 PM**

**Oversight – The City’s Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic**

**Full Written Testimony:**

Thank you to Council Member Gale Brewer, Chair of the Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Council Member Amanda Farias, Chair of the Committee on Economic Development, and the members of both committees for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

I am Merble Reagon, Executive Director of the Women’s Center for Education and Career Advancement. We have worked for 51 years to help achieve economic justice and career opportunities for New York City working families and have been the lead sponsors for six NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard reports since 2000. The Standard offers a realistic look at the incomes families need to make ends meet, based on where they live in NYC and the ages of their children. It calculates self-sufficiency “breakeven” working family budgets, including the costs of housing, childcare, health care, groceries, transportation, and other miscellaneous expenses – at a minimally adequate level.

We recently released the sixth NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard, a report called [\*Overlooked & Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City\*](#), in partnership with the Center for Women’s Welfare at the University of Washington, The United Way of New York City, The Fund for the City of New York, The New York Women’s Foundation, City Harvest, Food Bank For New York City, and Hunger Free New York City (a division of Hunger Free America). The findings unveil how precarious the lives of low-wage workers were before the pandemic, and it indicates just how vulnerable they will continue to be due to the COVID-19-triggered economic crisis.

Key findings of the report include the following:

- Since 2000, the costs of basic needs, on average, across NYC boroughs have increased 113%, while median earnings have increased by only 58%
- More than one out of three (36%) NYC working-age households lacks sufficient income to meet the minimum cost of living in New York City
- Before the Covid-19 pandemic, more than one in three – 2,378,730 New Yorkers – lacked enough income to cover food, shelter, health care and childcare and other bare necessities.

- For NYC families struggling to make ends meet, income inadequacy has been and continues to be an everyday ongoing struggle. And, it is largely low wages, not lack of work hours, that results in inadequate income.
- The majority of NYC households below the Standard had at least one employed adult.
- The 20 most common occupations below the Standard prior to the pandemic were essential worker positions largely held by women and/or BIPOC people, including home health aides, cashiers, child care workers, nursing assistants and cab drivers.

These and other critical findings of the report highlight the importance of ensuring that “New York City’s evolving workforce development plans in the wake of the pandemic” be laser-focused on addressing both the historic wage inequality for women and people of color and the economic realities of what NYC’s working families actually need to make ends meet. In addition, the report documents income inadequacy by a range of household characteristics, including, gender, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, citizenship and presence of children.

Also, the evidence in the report supports initiatives already underway to address wage inequities, such as the “JustPay” campaign to support fair wages for human services workers under contract with NYC and NYS; and, the NYC Salary Range Law, for which we commend the NYC City Council for passing. On a related note, we advocate for comprehensive oversight and enforcement of that law.

It is long past time to employ a policy approach that will best help NYC’s low-wage working families move beyond the pandemic and toward financial security. Their economic well-being is most assured when we generate policies based on the realities of a family’s life, rather than the one-size-fits-all approach of the Federal Poverty Measure, which proposes the same income adequacy dollar amounts for families in each of the 48 contiguous states.

In order to facilitate an economic recovery for New York City, it is imperative to measure income inadequacy by a measure such as the ***Self-Sufficiency Standard***, a realistic, geographically-specific, and family composition-specific measure that offers a clear picture of the exact incomes NYC working families need to make ends meet. Here is an example: In the Bronx, a working father with a four-year-old son needs to earn \$32 an hour and make an income of about \$68,000 to meet all expenses according to the Standard. According to the Official Poverty Measure, however, that same 2-person family only needs to earn \$10.40 an hour and make an income of about \$17,000. That is an astounding difference of \$51,000. The Standard calculates how much income more than 700 family types in different boroughs need to meet all their expenses.

This lack of sufficient income to meet basic needs is grossly undercounted largely because measures like the official poverty measure do not accurately document what it takes to afford just the basics, nor do they accurately pinpoint who lacks sufficient income. **Not only do governmental poverty statistics underestimate the number of households struggling to make ends meet, the underestimation creates broadly held misunderstandings about who is unable to afford basic needs, what skills and education they hold, and therefore what unmet needs they have.** These misapprehensions harm the ability of our society to respond to the changing

realities facing families with insufficient income, especially during and as a result of the pandemic.

Why not start out planning our way out of the pandemic by acknowledging what we know it really costs for our NYC working families to pay for every basic necessity instead of an outdated “one-size-fits all” poverty measure?

**We encourage you to consider using the NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard as a reality-based tool to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed strategies to assist working NYC families as we move forward from the pandemic to combat wage insecurity and create a workforce development strategy that supports living wages and, if necessary, work supports for all NYC workers.**

**We invite you to review the full report:**

**[Overlooked and Undercounted 2021: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City](#)**

Also, please feel welcome to explore the NYC Self-Sufficiency Project [findings and tools](#).

We invite you to take 5 minutes to test the accuracy of the NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard for both yourself and a typical constituent family [using the NYC Self-Sufficiency Budget Worksheet](#):

1. Enter your borough (the Bronx; North Manhattan; South Manhattan; Staten Island; Northwest Brooklyn; Brooklyn excluding NW Brooklyn)
2. Enter the ages of the people in your family
3. In seconds, you will see your self-sufficiency family budget and the annual/monthly/hourly wage needed to support that budget

Also, you can [use the NYC Demographic Dashboard](#) to see the percentage in your community districts of households without adequate income.

We offer the 2021 NYC Self-Sufficiency Standard report and tools to inform “New York City’s Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic” and stand ready to assist all efforts to that effect.

Thank you for this opportunity. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Jennifer Panicali at [jpanicali@fcny.org](mailto:jpanicali@fcny.org) or at 212-590-9455.

Best regards,

Merble Reagon

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# Testimony Before the New York City Council Committees on Economic Development and Investigations

Ms. Janis B. Quarles, Independent Workforce Development Consultant  
J.B. Quarles and Associates

Monday, March 21, 2022

Contact Person:

Ms. Janis B. Quarles, (347) 785-8278 or [2jbquarles@gmail.com](mailto:2jbquarles@gmail.com)

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Good Afternoon, and thank you committee chairs and members for holding today's hearing on workforce development. My name is Janis B. Quarles. I am a 20+ years workforce development professional. I have worked for The Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, The HOPE Program, Brown Community Development Corporation, and ResCare Workforce Development Corporation among other institutions.

I was pleased to learn of Mayor Adams' **Rebuild, Renew, Reinvent** initiatives. It is reminiscent of and builds on previous documents, including the **NYC Jobs Blueprint** of the Partnership for New York City, **New York Works and Career Pathways** reports from the De Blasio Administration, and the former Mayor's development efforts in the past.

As we look ahead to the future, I believe Mayor Adams' vision will guide much of our work. I am glad that this administration is looking at workforce development as an integral part of the city's economic recovery. Indeed, an adequately trained, skilled, and motivated workforce is one of the foundations for a successful New York City economy as we look ahead.

I want to express my support for the proposals of the New York City Employment and Training Coalition to add monetary commitments to the vision put forth by Mayor Adams and Deputy Mayor Torres-Springer. The coalition is correct in calling for additional dollars to support the NYC's workforce development ecosystem and to improve coordination with regards to existing funding streams.

Perhaps one item has been overlooked by the coalition concerning the skills sets of frontline workforce development professionals. In prior years, the focus of those on the frontline has been to provide job seekers with skills training that connect the newly trained to employment and place them on a road leading to a career pathway.

However, COVID-19 has forced us to rethink and retool the efforts of frontline workforce development professionals. In this recovery period, our longstanding training, placement, and career pathways challenges are still present. The new challenges lies with how to incorporate coaching and mental health supports into the work that the frontline workforce development professionals provide.

In the years ahead, those of us in this field must be more than trainers and connectors. We must have the capacity to recognize the mental health challenges facing those we engage, by strengthen the selection and assessment capacity of our frontline professionals, and provide them with coaching, counseling, and referral tools to help those we serve.

As such, a critical component of our workforce development efforts in the future will benefit by incorporating a mental health support infrastructure that has a specific workforce development

focus. The prior administration implemented the Connections-To-Care initiative that underscored the importance of mental health supports in everyday life. Therefore, it is my hope that this administration recognizes the need for dedicated mental health resources as we revamp, reshape, and reset our workforce development ecosystem.

I am available to continue these discussions and extend my leadership and management experience to create a strategic workforce development plan that focus on “People Centered” performance and a plan of action that is designed to analyze goals, gaps and future needs.

Thank you.

# Written Testimony for the Public Record

Submitted by Ms. Betty Ann Tamaisar, Director, Workforce Development on Behalf of BronxWorks

Submitted for the Joint Hearing Conducted by the New York City Council  
Committees on Investigations and Workforce Development

March 21, 2022

## **Contact Person:**

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## **Challenges**

The BronxWorks Workforce Development Department currently serves NYCHA residents, HPD Section 8 voucher holders, youth ages 14 to 24, residents of PACT/RAD projects, and non-custodial fathers. Collectively, our programs provide job readiness inclusive of resume assistance, interview preparation, job referrals & placements, occupational skills trainings in the protective services, construction and healthcare sectors, free tax service preparation, and one-on-one financial empowerment.

At the beginning and during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the department faced multiple challenges. We were forced to modify already tight budgets to accommodate for the purchase of laptops, mi-fi devices, and other mobile equipment to ensure that staff had the tools they needed to work 100% from home. These same budgets were modified again when our offices re-opened three months later to purchase mandatory PPE and Plexiglas necessary to maintain the safety of staff and clients alike.

In terms of staff funding, programs such as the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) were cancelled in 2020, leaving thousands of young people without the opportunity to earn much needed money during the summer months. When this happened, BronxWorks also had to scramble to re-locate SYEP staff to other programs to prevent them from becoming unemployed. Funding from the Robin Hood Foundation in 2020 enabled our organization to provide SYEP services at about 20% of pre-COVID levels.

Our services for opportunity youth were similarly impacted. Classroom-based pre-HSE and HSE instruction had to shift to a remote mode. For youth who were ready to take the TASC exam, testing sites were shut down, making it impossible for our students in our adult education programs to take the exam after months of preparation.

At the same time, many participants reported that they were suffering from mental health issues and food insecurity. In other instances, prospective enrollees chose not to participate in our adult education or other workforce programs because of mental strain, fatigue, depression, or other mental conditions.

Despite these challenges, our workforce development efforts persisted. Realizing the need for in-person services because many of our clients are not tech savvy, we re-opened our workforce offices five days a week after working remotely for three months.

The first wave of the pandemic resulted in the Bronx jobless rate skyrocketing from around five percent in December 2019 to about 25% in the summer of 2020, a rate not seen anywhere in the

United States since the worst years of the Great Depression. With many household breadwinners out of work, it was imperative that BronxWorks stepped in to ensure that these families had food on the table.

Towards that end, BronxWorks partnered with GrowNYC and City Harvest and acquired private funding to operate food pantries out of two of Workforce Development offices, the Melrose Houses in Bronx Community District (CD) 1 and Twin Parks West in Bronx CD 5. The Melrose Houses are one of four NYCHA complexes served by our Jobs-Plus program, while Twins Parks is one of several locations participating in NYCHA's PACT/RAD apartment improvement and social service initiative.

Throughout the pandemic, a major challenge has been to identify and provide skills training opportunities that will enable job seekers to quickly acquire new skills to return to or remain in the workforce. While the pandemic wiped out jobs in the arts, entertainment, food service, and hospitality sectors, it helped open some opportunities in the building trades, logistics, retail, protective services, and transportation fields. Against this backdrop, BronxWorks applied for and received one-year foundation grants to provide free occupational skill training in the construction and protective services field.

### Solutions

BronxWorks supports the New York City Employment and Training Coalition (NYCETC) to request that more funding be set aside to provide 360-degree wraparound services - including childcare, internet and computer access, transportation, food security, mental health and financial empowerment - that empower, provide security, and increase the ability to learn and earn. The populations served by BronxWorks Workforce Development program face significant barriers to employment that more often than not hinder their success.

Some of the challenges our clients faced during the pandemic included mental health impairments and food insecurity. In many instances, employment programs are asked to assist clients with additional needs with no additional funding given to provide those services.

To effectively address barriers to employment, significant investments in wraparound, supportive services are required. These services must be embedded into the traditional service paradigms for workforce development programs to foster maximum success. They include:

1. The introduction of mental health screening and assessment tools to workforce development professionals to help identify mental health conditions early in the client engagement process
2. The retention of qualified mental health clinicians to assist workforce development professionals with the diagnosis of individuals who seek workforce development help but may first need mental health counseling
3. The provision of or links to childcare services for those who seek employment assistance
4. Free access to computers to support employment readiness and job search activities, as well as to participate in career counseling or advancement workshops done virtually
5. Emergency food assistance, including meal provision, grocery vouchers, or access to food pantries, farm stands, and farmers' markets, in particular farm stands or farmers' markets that accept Health Bucks, WIC, SNAP, or other food access benefits

6. Financial counseling services for the consumers of workforce development services before and after they become employed
7. Ongoing financial literacy training for workforce development professionals
8. Resources for independent job search assistance

BronxWorks also supports NYCETC in requesting that \$250 million be set aside to launch an extensive re-employment program to support the thousands of New Yorkers who remain unemployed, the businesses that continue to struggle to hire, and the growing sectors that are developing in the pandemic. During the pandemic, many people were laid off and many others had to quit their jobs to take care of their children when schools were remote, take care of loved ones who were ill, or recover from illness themselves.

As these individuals prepare to re-enter the workforce many of them do not wish to return to jobs that pay minimum wage, put them at heightened risk of contracting COVID, or expose them to other conditions that could undermine their long-term health. As they look for new opportunities, it is essential that a comprehensive plan be created to identify recruitment, training, paid internships, and job opportunities for the sectors mentioned in the mayor’s blueprint report.

A centralized recruitment site where individuals interested in certain jobs can view and apply for training and job opportunities would be a good starting point, as well as a centralized database to track metrics and to demonstrate success.

Engaging employers who have a thorough understanding of the populations we serve and are 100% committed to hiring from that population is of the utmost importance. Providing wage subsidies or tax credits to these employers as incentives to hire will also have great impact.

Job opportunities should be created with varying level of education, experience and qualifications in mind. Jobs should pay sustainable wages and come with excellent benefits.

Lastly, and most importantly, funding should support all New Yorkers, not just one group or demographic. Many of the workforce development programs that currently operate in the city are limited to certain populations. This practice inadvertently excludes individuals who desperately need employment assistance but do not fit into any one category.

Below is a breakdown of enrollments and placements for all our Workforce Development Programs for Calendar Year 2020 and 2021.

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Program Funding Source</b>	<b>Enrolled 2020</b>	<b>Placed 2020</b>
Jobs Plus Program	Human Resource Administration (HRA)	498	74
Cross Bronx Preservation Program	L+M Development Partners	70	13
Twin Park West/Highbridge/Franklin Program	Gilbane Development Company	82	3
Bronxchester Community Services Program	L+M Development Partners	259	20
Volunteer Income Tax Program	Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)	3437	n/a
Financial Empowerment Program	Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)	435	n/a



Family Self-Sufficiency Program	NYC Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD)	20	2
Summer Youth Employment Program	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	347	347
Opportunity Youth Program	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	48	48
Work Learn & Grow	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	55	55
EXCEL Adult Literacy Program	Robinhood Foundation, Cabrini Foundation, Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	186	132
<b>Total</b>		5437	694

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Program Funding Source</b>	<b>Enrolled 2021</b>	<b>Placed 2021</b>
Jobs Plus Program	Human Resource Administration (HRA)	110	54
Cross Bronx Preservation Program	L+M Development Partners	167	18
Twin Park West/Highbridge/Franklin Program	Gilbane Development Company	88	21
Bronxchester Community Services Program	L+M Development Partners	251	32
Volunteer Income Tax Program	Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)	6630	n/a
Financial Empowerment Program	Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)	729	n/a
Family Self-Sufficiency Program	NYC Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD)	40	4
HERO Dads Program	Montefiore Medical Center	80	15
Summer Youth Employment Program	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	1104	582
Opportunity Youth Program	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	40	40
Work Learn & Grow	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	40	40
Work Learn & Grow Environmental Corp	Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	45	45
EXCEL Adult Literacy Program	Robinhood Foundation, Cabrini Foundation, Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)	151	84
<b>Total</b>		9475	935

**Testimony by Kelly Washburn  
Senior Director of Workforce Development at Fedcap Inc.**

**Joint Oversight Hearing:  
The City's Evolving Workforce Development Plans in the Wake of the Pandemic  
Committees on Economic Development (Chair: CM Farias) and Oversight & Investigations (Chair: CM  
Brewer)  
March 21, 2022**

Dear Chair Farias, Chair Brewer, and Council Members,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on this very important topic. My name is Kelly Washburn, and I am the Senior Director for Workforce Development for Fedcap Inc. I am also an inaugural member of the NYCETC Workforce Policy Strategy Council.

Fedcap Inc. operates several workforce development contracts funded by the Human Resources Administration (HRA). Fedcap Inc.'s mission is to make high outcome, life-changing, sustainable differences for individuals and families to improve their economic well-being through work. We serve a diverse population that experiences major barriers to gaining competitive wage jobs, which could support self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on public assistance benefits. These barriers include low literacy and math levels, limited education and digital literacy skills, and inadequate access to technology, all of which were amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic in March of 2020, Fedcap Inc. has worked tirelessly to pivot its programs by providing virtual services to our program participants. This was a major undertaking as a result of the digital divide that exists. Fedcap made extensive efforts to incorporate basic digital literacy skills training into its programs and provide access to technology. This was done by modifying budgets and reallocating funds to purchase laptops and WiFi for our participants to be able to engage remotely in our program services. While we were able to provide this technology, it emphasized the larger issue that is the skills gap that exists when it comes to the utilization of technology.

Fedcap made best efforts to incorporate basic computer and digital literacy skills training into its programs and shifted quickly to provide hybrid services to participants. These enhanced and diverse services were expected by our funders while simultaneously sustaining significant budget reductions across all our city-funded contracts creating even more barriers and challenges to serving program participants. These challenges were further magnified by the lack of flexibility that exists with these contracts and limitations with how we could spend funds to better support our participants.

While programs begin to ramp up post pandemic, increased investment to provide access to digital technology and digital literacy training into contracts such as ours will be necessary to setting our program participants up for success. Specifically, we support NYCETC's request to fund new program innovation and development with at least **\$100 million** in new funding per year. This would include funding bridge and pre-apprenticeship programs with minimum **\$20 million** in new funding to ensure equity and access to the broader workforce system for the nearly 43% of New Yorkers who lack the literacy and numeracy skills required to enter the advanced training needed."

Additionally, the need to invest in Bridge Programs particularly for our young adult program participants is essential as a significant gap remains for this population in terms of accessing training, education, and employment. Developing successful Bridge programming requires extensive time, resources and a robust collaboration with employers.

Over the last year Fedcap dedicated a great deal of resources developing a Bridge Training in collaboration with CVS for our young adult program participants. This Bridge training was specifically designed to prepare participants to successfully secure employment as Pharmacy Techs with CVS, an in-demand job with opportunities for career growth. Fedcap successfully launched our first cohort last month and, in its initial stages, it became apparent how essential Bridge training is in preparing our participants with the necessary skills to transition into careers.

With additional investment, Fedcap could scale this Bridge training, develop additional Bridge trainings in high-demand sectors, and provide financial support through stipends. Stipends for our young adult participants will contribute to improved engagement and their success further supporting Fedcap's mission to make high outcome, life-changing, sustainable differences for individuals and families to improve their economic well-being through work.

Thank you again for the opportunity and for your consideration on these matters. I am happy to answer any questions from the Council on my written testimony.



Chair Farias, Chair Brewer and members of the committees,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Derick Bowers and I am the Director of Social Enterprise in New York City for the Center for Employment Opportunities, or also known as CEO

CEO is a nonprofit organization that was founded in New York City in 1996 and provides comprehensive employment support to individuals who have recently returned home from incarceration, including transitional work and daily pay. CEO believes every person returning from incarceration should have the opportunity for full participation in society, and be provided the support needed to achieve social and economic mobility

At CEO, we know that a job can prevent a return to incarceration. Many returning citizens -- especially those who have more limited work experience -- need stronger supports and on-ramps into the world of work. Achieving our vision of economic mobility requires city investment and incentives to create more high quality jobs for individuals coming home from incarceration. As a member of the New York City Employment & Training Coalition we urge the next Administration to adopt the [Inclusive Growth Blueprint](#). Specific to job seekers with past convictions we also recommend the following:

1. **Invest in transitional jobs during reentry as a bridge to permanent employment.** Transitional jobs can uniquely address goals for both criminal justice reform and workforce investment. Local government agencies can dedicate a portion of their existing maintenance or contracted services budgets to provide transitional work opportunities for individuals coming home from incarceration. This effort should include providing training opportunities for qualified individuals to move from transitional work into union jobs with the city.
2. **Invest in alternatives to incarceration (ATI) and reentry services.** The city's investment in the ATI Coalition has been cut during Covid-19 and must be increased in order to adequately meet the need of the number of people coming home annually. The immediate support for people when they come home is a critical bridge, helping them address their immediate financial needs, and create a pathway to permanent employment.
3. **Provide financial incentives to businesses that hire individuals coming home from incarceration.** Current Work Opportunity Tax Credits and financial incentives for businesses are underutilized because they are relatively small and bureaucratic for employers.
4. Create procurement structures at the federal, state, and local level that **require government contractors and agencies to hire a certain percentage of workers with a conviction history** or who have experienced incarceration.
5. **Eliminate structural regulations that prevent individuals with felony convictions from accessing work sites.** This issue is particularly pertinent for construction work, where certain conviction histories prevent individuals from work sites in schools, hospitals, military properties, and other facilities where large construction projects take place.

Despite recognition that a key purpose of the workforce system is to help people reconnect to the labor market, many recently incarcerated individuals are shut out of the workforce system and its training programs due to a variety of policy and systemic barriers; for example, only 8 percent of those exiting Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programming were reported as justice-involved. The following changes can address the primary barriers that keep them from accessing these training programs, which facilitate access to high quality jobs:

1. **Increase workforce funding for stipends and supportive services to support people while they are in training programs**, particularly for pre-apprenticeship programs or other apprenticeship requirements. Support service activities should specifically include financial planning that supports savings programs and addresses reimbursement for obtaining state identification, licenses, and other employment documents.
2. **Expand eligibility criteria for apprenticeship programs, and fund pre-apprenticeship that facilitates training access to ensure equitable access to opportunities.** There are a number of barriers to apprenticeship programs for individuals with conviction histories, including the lack of support services, instructors who can understand an individual's lived experience, the number of hours on-the-job training before you can access a union job, the ability to obtain a driver's license, the high school diploma or GED requirement for apprenticeship programs, and refusal to hire people without on-the-job experience.
3. **End incarceration labor programs that financially exploit individuals while they are incarcerated.** Programs that require individuals to do work while they are incarcerated should pay workers wages that are comparable to wages earned on the outside for the same work. Vocational training programs should also offer other financial support to allow individuals to earn money while they are incarcerated, and enable credentials earned while incarcerated to extend directly into employment upon release. Incarcerated workers should not have unpaid fines and fees (money that goes directly to the state or local government) deducted from their wages.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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