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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

PROCEEDINGS AT RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR AND TRAINING

IN RE: WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT
PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: APRIL 16, 2007

TIME: 10:00 A.M.

PLACE: BUILDING 73

1511 PONTIAC AVENUE

CRANSTON, RI

BEFORE:

JOHN O'HARE, Administrator, State Workforce
Investment Office

WILLIAM MCGOWAN, Chairman, Planning and Evaluation
Committee, Governor's Workforce Board
of Rhode Island

1 (HEARING COMMENCED AT 10:02 a.m.)

2 MR. O'HARE: We're going to call this
3 hearing to order. Today's hearing was noticed in the
4 Providence Journal on March 21st, 2007, the hearing is
5 on the State's Draft Workforce Investment Plan, on
6 behalf of the Governor's Workforce Office, excuse me,
7 on behalf of the Governor's Workforce Board. The plan
8 was also noticed on the Secretary of State's website,
9 the Governor's Workforce Board website, the State
10 Workers' Investment Office website, as of March 28th.
11 Comments, written comments can be made today along with
12 oral comments. Comments can also be received through
13 tomorrow, close of business.

14 We've received two written comments which
15 I'll read into the record prior to taking your comments
16 here today. The first comment is from Linda Katz,
17 Policy Director of the Poverty Institute, Rhode Island
18 College School of Social Work, Providence,
19 Rhode Island.

20 "Suggestions for revisions to the WIA
21 State Plan. Understanding that revisions to the state
22 plan are not intended to be large in scope, we offer
23 the following suggestions that can help strengthen the
24 services for lower-skilled Rhode Islanders. The
25 suggestions for strengthening the connection to the

1 adult education system are aligned with the state's
2 intention to develop a united plan in the future.

3 "Item one, strengthen the connection to
4 the adult education system. The plan should reflect
5 the critical work that the Office of Adult Education at
6 the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
7 has accomplished over the past two years, as well as
8 the involvement of the Office of Adult Education on the
9 Workforce Investment Board and its Adult Education and
10 Literacy Subcommittee. The plan should also reflect
11 how progress will be made in integrating adult
12 education as part of the overall workforce system and
13 strategies.

14 "There are large numbers of Rhode Island
15 adult seekers and incumbent workers who lack the skills
16 to fill vacancies in high-demand occupations. There
17 are nearly 142,000 adults in Rhode Island who do not
18 have a high school diploma, and an additional 35,000
19 adults who have limited English proficiency, and 25,000
20 of these Rhode Islanders lack a high school credential,
21 as well.

22 "The adult education system is a vital
23 part of the workforce development system and the needs
24 of adults with limited English and/or literacy skills
25 should be addressed in the plan.

1 "The plan references low-skilled/low-
2 income workforce initiatives under state workforce
3 priorities (Section II), but there should be more of a
4 focus on workers with low literacy and ESOL. The plan
5 should be modified to include the following:

6 "The state's strategic economic
7 development goals for attracting, retaining and growing
8 business and industry should include strengthening and
9 expanding the adult education system to increase the
10 pool of Rhode Island adults who are ready to
11 participate in the innovation agenda. The Office of
12 Adult Education within RIDE should be included as one
13 of the entities that has been established to help
14 institutionalize and sustain the innovation agenda
15 (Section 1, A).

16 "Section 1, B should include as a priority
17 efforts to link adults without a high school diploma
18 and adults with limited English proficiency to
19 appropriate adult education programs and efforts to
20 encourage employers to help employees in need of ESOL
21 or adult education to obtain those services.

22 "The Rhode Island Department of Elementary
23 and Secondary Education should be added as a member of
24 the Workforce Investment Board.

25 "The One-Stop centers should increase

1 focus on linking job-seekers and incumbent workers who
2 have low literacy or English skills with programs that
3 can address those barriers to higher-wage jobs.
4 Materials should highlight the importance of literacy
5 and ESOL, counselors should emphasize this, information
6 about ESOL and literacy programs should be easily
7 available, et cetera. Sections of the plan that
8 describe how services are delivered at the One-Stops,
9 and how services to specific populations are delivered
10 should describe actions that will be taken to link
11 workers with literacy, GED and ESOL services.

12 "Two, include strategies to improve job
13 services for adults entering the workforce system
14 through the Department of Human Services' door.

15 "For families receiving cash assistance
16 from the Family Independence Program, the Department of
17 Human Services is the door to preparing for and finding
18 work. These are adults who should be a high priority
19 for state strategies and investments to become workers
20 in the innovation economy. An investment in these
21 families is not only an investment in a parent as a
22 member of the current workforce, but an investment in
23 the children as the future workforce.

24 "Strategies to improve job services for
25 FIP, Family Independence Plan, parents, that should be

1 included in the plan are: Training by One-Stop staff
2 or DHS social case workers who are working with FIP
3 parents to develop employment plans so that appropriate
4 referrals to the One-Stop can be made and so that DHS
5 staff are skilled at using information on the One-Stop
6 website. For example, LMI data, to help parents craft
7 appropriate plans. Identification of specialists at
8 the One-Stop centers to whom FIP parents can be
9 referred for services, including referral of parents
10 who have time off of FIP and are no longer eligible to
11 receive employment services from DHS. Create a link
12 between the employer service representatives, the DHS
13 staff and also with programs providing job readiness/
14 job search services to FIP parents, so that when an
15 employer has a job order, this information is provided
16 directly to DHS staff and community providers.

17 "Three, include strategies that help
18 lower-wage workers access work supports. Helping
19 adults with low wages to access benefits such as Food
20 Stamps, child care assistance, health insurance and the
21 earned income tax credit can help stabilize that
22 person's employment. As a strategy for supporting
23 human capital solutions (Section VII E) we suggest that
24 the employer service representatives be provided
25 information to share with employers regarding

1 eligibility for these programs. The ESRs could help
2 employers develop ways of disseminating information to
3 their employees and advising employees about resources
4 in the community that could help them access these
5 benefits.

6 "In addition, information about these
7 benefits should be available at the One-Stop centers
8 and counselors should advise customers about them.
9 Finally, the rapid response team should also be
10 prepared to inform employees about accessing these
11 benefits."

12 That is the end of the statement by the
13 Poverty Institute. The next statement, prior to taking
14 your comments, is from Diane Cook, Policy Specialist at
15 Department of Human Services.

16 "Thank you for inviting early input into
17 the development of the new WIA strategic plan.

18 "The business need for a flexible and ever
19 more technologically-competent workforce is a challenge
20 for the pre-K to 16 system and business and economic
21 leaders. The public workforce development system must
22 be aware of evolutions in the economy and advise job
23 seekers appropriately, as well as offer options to its
24 customers that facilitate their career pathways. But
25 the public system has a greater role to play, and one

1 for which it is uniquely suited, in preparing and
2 placing workers for those 58 percent of the jobs in
3 2012 that are projected to require on-the-job training,
4 and those 14.2 percent of jobs in 2012 that are
5 projected to require short-term vocational training or
6 prior work experience.

7 "The point of a strategic plan for WIA
8 Title I and Wagner-Peyser investments is to maximize
9 the effect of these limited public dollars for the
10 public good. In some sense, USDOL has already
11 determined where public investments matter: Youth,
12 especially out-of-school youth, dislocated workers,
13 including displaced homemakers, and adults, especially
14 those who are un- or under-employed and/or have
15 barriers to employment. Many, perhaps most, of these
16 individuals are low-income. Many, perhaps most, are
17 correspondingly low-skilled. But, the state must
18 determine how, when, and through what vehicles, and
19 specifically with whom or for whom to make these
20 investments.

21 "So long as the state cannot or chooses
22 not to mandate that all job openings be funneled
23 through the public labor exchange system, then the
24 state must make its workforce investment decisions in
25 light of this reality: The public labor exchange

1 system, the heart of the One-Stop system, is just one
2 option among many in a large, competitive labor
3 exchange industry. The One-Stop exists alongside the
4 green boxes on street corners that hold free papers
5 filled with want ads, the red boxes on other street
6 corners that hold the Journal employment notices, the
7 for-profit employment agencies that contract with many
8 Rhode Island companies, the nonprofit agencies that
9 hold business relationships dear, and a proliferation
10 of web-based labor-exchange sites. So if the One-Stop
11 cannot corner the market on labor-exchange services,
12 then it should become efficient in its niche market --
13 the people who need it most.

14 "Arguably those in greatest need are those
15 Rhode Islanders whose single greatest source of income
16 is public dollars, and, arguably, helping those
17 individuals to transition from public dollars to
18 private dollars is the wisest investment we could make
19 in public monies. Since, however, the One-Stop neither
20 knows all job openings nor holds all business
21 relationships, it must have employment counselors with
22 superior skills in helping these customers navigate the
23 competitive labor exchange marketplace. And, since the
24 One-Stop neither can, nor would want to be all things
25 to all people, it must have superior collaborative

1 relationships with sister agencies to ensure these
2 customers are prepared to transition successfully to
3 the private sector.

4 "As we consider the questions of how,
5 when, and through what vehicles, with whom and for whom
6 to make these investments, we can acknowledge that
7 sister agencies are critically important to the
8 One-Stop, in order to successfully serve low-income
9 low-skilled youth and adults through the labor exchange
10 system. We can also acknowledge that considerable
11 service delivery with public funds is accomplished
12 through local nonprofits. With an increased emphasis
13 on monitoring and performance-based contracting, the
14 use of nonprofits is a cost-effective means of
15 achieving the public's goals. The impact of the
16 strategic planning in this regard is to assure that
17 programs that are carried out with public dollars
18 address the target customers in the volume and with the
19 products proportionate to the need.

20 "To make the calculation of how much of
21 what to invest in whom, the state must face the
22 question of how it makes its investment decisions.
23 While evidence-based and data-driven decision making is
24 conceptually embraced, it cannot be exercised unless
25 sufficient resources are allocated to timely data

1 collection and analysis. As state budgets become more
2 strained, the allocation of resources become more
3 competitive and critical. It may seem like the worst
4 time, but it is actually the best time to invest in the
5 effort to collect and analyze statewide data on the
6 people we serve across agencies, the types and costs of
7 services utilized, and search for more effective and
8 timely intervention strategies. We all know that
9 preventive measures are cost-effective in the long run,
10 but human nature keeps us too often focused on the
11 short-term crises. An investment now in
12 evidence-based, data-driven decision making is the
13 equivalent of preventive medicine and will bring a
14 greater return on investment in the future. Such an
15 approach has the added value of bringing state
16 departments into closer collaboration who otherwise
17 make workforce development investments separately for
18 their customers.

19 "Finally, on the question of when to make
20 the investments, the recent approach to the development
21 of the three-year adult education RFP is a good example
22 of incremental change and successive approximations to
23 the goal. Over three years ago, a statewide collection
24 of interested parties was convened by the governor's
25 office to develop a vision and a framework for fixing a

1 broken adult education system. Stemming from the
2 governor's initiative, a joint RFP by several funding
3 partners was developed and issued two years ago, but
4 providers still had to apply for separate pots of
5 dollars within the single RFP. Now, a new joint RFP is
6 being developed where essentially all adult education
7 funders have combined their dollars into a single pot,
8 and providers have a streamlined proposal template.
9 With the creation of an adult education MIS that tracks
10 students by characteristics that correspond to criteria
11 associated with funding streams, the intended effect is
12 to reduce labor for all parties while assuring an audit
13 trail for all. Yet even this RFP is just one more step
14 along the road to strategic investing, as definitive
15 data on need, outcomes, and cost-benefit is not yet
16 available to drive resource allocation.

17 "Similar to what has been happening in
18 adult education, collaborative strategic planning and
19 investing must occur in the training, employment
20 preparation, and labor exchange aspects of workforce
21 development. We might use an approach similar to the
22 governor's fiscal fitness initiative, wherein an
23 interagency group, consisting of key representatives of
24 members of the governor's workforce cabinet, could be
25 released 80 percent time for four to six weeks to

1 develop a roadmap for future collaborative investments.
2 A proposed plan with a five- to seven-year timeline
3 could only come to reality through a commitment of
4 resources by the governor's cabinet, from their
5 respective funding streams. At that point, the
6 Governor's Workforce Board would consider the draft
7 plan in light of its economic and workforce development
8 vision and policies.

9 "In summary, a strategic investment of WIA
10 dollars should be made in publicly and privately run
11 programs that individually are high-performing in
12 serving people who are publicly supported to transition
13 to private competitive employment, and that
14 collectively address supply-side and demand-side needs.
15 To do that, the state must invest in data collection,
16 analysis, and collaborative (particularly with sister
17 agencies) evidence-based decision making, investment
18 monitoring, and reevaluation, with the goal of
19 continuous improvements in our holistic (beyond WIA and
20 Wagner-Peyser) system.

21 "While the state's workforce development
22 system may look forward to a day when it could be
23 demand-side driven, it cannot deny the current reality
24 of the supply side. As ex-offenders prepare to leave
25 the prisons, as welfare recipients seek to leave the

1 rolls, as disconnected youth leave the schools, ready
2 or not, as the workforce is increasingly characterized
3 by foreign-born workers, as the population ages and
4 people with disabilities seek to make their share of
5 meaningful contributions to our economy, then our
6 workforce development system must be prepared to
7 embrace them, prepare them, train them and support
8 them. If the public system does not do that, who will?
9 These Rhode Islanders will be sporadically and often
10 ineffectively serviced through the various labor
11 exchange entities that the overall marketplace
12 supports. If they are poorly served in that
13 marketplace, then we can expect recidivism and
14 continued reliance on public income supports. We, as a
15 state, can do more to serve these Rhode Islanders
16 better than their short-term employment needs while
17 simultaneously appreciating the high-growth, high-
18 demand industries that offer opportunities for their
19 long-term economic well-being."

20 This is the end of Diane Cook's statement.

21 I will take the individuals who signed in in order.

22 I would like to introduce William McGowen,
23 the chairman of the Planning and Evaluation Committee
24 on the Governor's Workforce Board of Rhode Island.

25 The first statement, Robert Ricci,

1 Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Board.

2 MR. RICCI: Good morning, thank you for
3 the opportunity to comment on the state's two-year
4 plan. My name is Robert Ricci, the administrator of
5 the local workforce investment area known as the
6 Providence/Cranston, and also known as Workforce
7 Solutions of Providence/Cranston. Generally, my
8 comment is supportive this morning. We applaud the
9 plan and the work that has been done to prepare it, and
10 the work by the Governor's Workforce Board in working
11 with the local WIBs. We also would like to recognize
12 the good work of the Governor's Workforce Board and the
13 Department of Labor and Training in identifying
14 employment sectors with which our plan addresses and
15 over the next two years the local Workforce Investment
16 Board of Providence/Cranston will be working in
17 conjunction with the Governor's Workforce Board to
18 realize the goals and policies that it has set out, and
19 in particular to work to improve employment
20 opportunities in the sectors that have been identified.

21 I would like to just briefly go over some
22 of the particular issues that face Providence. I think
23 that the comments by both Diane Cook and the Poverty
24 Institute echo some of these factors. The population
25 in Providence is particularly challenged as we try to

1 move a great deal of people into the workforce, and the
2 challenge for the state and for the local board is how
3 do we connect, how do we connect your existing
4 industries and emerging industries with the available
5 population that is either in the workforce, or would
6 like to be in the workforce, where we're faced with a
7 particular challenge in the amount of poverty that is
8 evident in the Providence population. And I would just
9 like to, for the record, enter into the record some of
10 the facts regarding poverty in Providence and how this
11 relates as a challenge for policy makers to address
12 this.

13 29 percent of the residents in Providence
14 were living in poverty in 2005. 15 percent of those,
15 or roughly 24,000, of Providence residents were living
16 in extreme poverty, below 50 percent of the poverty
17 threshold in 2005. And just to give you an idea of
18 what the poverty threshold would be, approximately, for
19 a single-parent household with two children, \$15,000 of
20 income would be the poverty threshold. So what they're
21 saying is that 15 percent are below, roughly around
22 \$7,000 of that threshold, or \$7,000. 18 percent of
23 Providence residents had incomes between 100 to 200
24 percent of the federal poverty threshold. So roughly
25 18 percent are making between \$15,000 and \$30,000 a

1 year, and they have families. In 2005 the poverty
2 threshold for a single parent with two children was
3 \$15,735. That, I referenced earlier. Minority
4 residents are more likely to live in poverty than white
5 residents; 51 percent of Providence residents living in
6 poverty in 2005 were Hispanic. And this brings up what
7 the other speakers also mentioned, our efforts to teach
8 English as a second language. 43 percent of the
9 children under age 18 were living in poverty in 2005,
10 and 40 percent of all poor residents of Providence were
11 under the age of 18. This is a challenge for our
12 education system, as well as our workforce system.
13 When we see how many children are living in poverty in
14 Providence, it's staggering. According to an analysis
15 of the Census 2000 data by the Providence Plan, child
16 poverty in Providence neighborhoods ranged from zero in
17 downtown and the East Side to as much as 60 percent in
18 the Hartford area. It's concentrated in certain areas,
19 which I'm sure doesn't come as a surprise. Of
20 working-age adults between the ages of 25 to 64 living
21 in poverty, 71 percent were female and 29 percent male.
22 Three-quarters of poor children in Providence live in
23 households headed by single women.

24 So, the facts bear out that in Providence
25 we have a great number of people who are living in

1 poverty, and part of the problem is that they lack
2 English skills and literacy skills, and therefore lack
3 the skills to find employment. And it also poses a
4 challenge not only for the labor department and the
5 local boards, as well as the Governor's Workforce
6 Board, but also our education department, and that is
7 where we work together. One program that we're working
8 on in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of
9 Education is to provide short-term literacy
10 opportunities to move people to the point where they
11 can be trained or find employment, as opposed to a full
12 GED program. Another program we're working on in
13 Providence is to match industries' skills with the jobs
14 that industry is providing, with the establishment of a
15 Providence Skills Center that works with customer
16 service as its primary competency or workforce skill,
17 and it is in partnership with business. Partnership
18 with business is very important, and at that center we
19 are partnered with CVS Corporation, which provides
20 opportunities for clerk positions, customer service
21 positions, as well as pharmacy tech training. We're
22 also working in cooperation with the State Department
23 of Labor and Training, and this is a statewide center
24 and actually a hub and example for all of New England.

25 I am going to keep my comments brief

1 today, there are other folks who need to comment. In
2 closing, I would say it is a good plan. The
3 Providence/Cranston local workforce board endorses this
4 plan and we look forward to our continued collaboration
5 and working to solve these issues. Thank you very
6 much.

7 MR. O'HARE: Thank you for your comment.
8 The next organization is the Tech Collective
9 represented by Tim Hebert, and I believe you're also
10 the president of the Atrion Corporation.

11 MR. HEBERT: My name is Tim Hebert. I am
12 the chairman and president of the Tech Collective, as
13 well as the CEO of Atrion Corporation, and this is a
14 business located here in Warwick, Rhode Island. First
15 of all, I do want to say I'm in full support of the
16 program we saw here. The one thing I do want to add is
17 I think the stuff that you're seeing on the information
18 technology and professional services side may not be as
19 accurate as what is really happening in the industry.
20 One of the challenges that we're facing within the
21 State of Rhode Island is finding high-end technical
22 resources. We're in the process of hiring for five
23 positions today. I have not one candidate from the
24 Rhode Island job market for that area. We're
25 interviewing people from New York, Washington, D.C.,

1 Boston, Connecticut, and we're trying to get them to
2 relocate to the state to fill these positions. Finding
3 high-end talent in the State of Rhode Island is very
4 challenging.

5 The second element that we're finding a
6 real hard time with that is changing is the number of
7 students going from high school to secondary school in
8 the math/science/engineering/technology career field is
9 greatly reducing. So even to find candidates in that
10 space, that can come in as an entry-level position, is
11 very challenging for us at this point in time. We have
12 a very active internship program at our corporation, we
13 bring in about 50 interns per year, of which 60 percent
14 of these interns do not stay in the State of
15 Rhode Island. They end up leaving and going elsewhere.
16 So, the challenge is finding people at the high school
17 level, going into the secondary educational outlet in
18 math/science/technology, specifically in my industry,
19 information technology, getting them to stay in the
20 state. They can make more money outside the state in
21 markets like Boston and Connecticut. So it's hard to
22 be competitive in that area.

23 The other challenge that we're finding is
24 the definition of entry level is changing and the
25 school systems that are providing candidates today are

1 not keeping pace with the industry. So for us to bring
2 in an entry-level person out of college after a
3 four-year program into our industry, we have about six
4 months to nine months worth of retraining to do to make
5 this person really valuable for our organization. The
6 areas that are missing is, number one, the skill sets
7 and technology are outdated. They're probably a year
8 to three years behind, depending on the university or
9 school they're coming from. The second element is that
10 the curriculum in most of these organizations are all
11 on the technical aptitude and very little on soft
12 skills, so customer service, project management,
13 problem solving, management, those kind of skill sets,
14 communications, are very, very weak. Tech Collective
15 is currently doing a study with businesses in the State
16 of Rhode Island on this exact issue of, how do we
17 address entry-level problems? We're finishing the
18 first phase of that analysis as we speak, and we're
19 looking for solutions on how to address this particular
20 problem.

21 What we're seeing today is about a
22 50 percent drop in people that are going from high
23 school into secondary education in the information
24 technology career field. That is from the year 2000.
25 So, it's a real challenge for the industry to grow our

1 businesses. Just to give you an idea of what this
2 industry is, we have 105 employees at Atrion Networking
3 Corporation. Our average salary, just salary with no
4 bonuses and commissions and that kind of stuff, is
5 \$57,585 per employee in our organization. With bonuses
6 and commissions and things, we have a slightly
7 different model, it's not based on overtime and hourly
8 wages, the average is about \$75,000 a year per employee
9 in our company. These are high-wage positions. Entry
10 level usually starts around \$35,000 a year and it takes
11 a person approximately two years to get into the
12 \$50,000 to \$60,000 range with the right level of
13 retraining. So, I think we need more in the area of
14 information technology to grow the industry.

15 If we look at the industry in general from
16 the way it's growing, just from what is happening in
17 the industry, we're seeing an average of a 20 percent
18 growth per year. The industry I'm in now across the
19 United States is growing at a rate of about 35 percent
20 per year. It is a very high-growth rate. We had some
21 problems in our industry, probably five years ago,
22 2000, 2001, 2002, where there was actually a reduction
23 in the industry because of the .com bust, but we are on
24 a recovery path that is outpacing talent that is
25 available. That is all I have. Thank you.

1 MR. O'HARE: Thank you for your comment.

2 A point of information, approximately how many
3 companies are in the Tech Collective?

4 MR. HEBERT: We have about 200 members at
5 this point in time, and the survey that we're doing is
6 with about 80 companies that have IT requirements.

7 MR. O'HARE: Thank you for your comments.
8 The next speaker is Leslie Taito, representing
9 Rhode Island manufacturers.

10 MS. TAITO: Good morning, Leslie Taito,
11 chief executive officer for the Rhode Island
12 Manufacturing Extension Services and also the lead
13 partner for the Manufacturing Industry Initiative.
14 We're very supportive of the proposal and I want to say
15 a couple of things about manufacturing, if I may.

16 Manufacturing in the State of Rhode Island
17 currently has an image problem. Although everything
18 you see and read says that manufacturing is declining,
19 the number of jobs are actually declining because of
20 overseas competition, actually the manufacturing jobs
21 are offering a higher-than-average wage and it's become
22 much more technical and you need a higher level of
23 critical analysis and education now to work in the
24 manufacturing field. However, there are still
25 possibilities for employment, entry level, from what it

1 was ten years ago. We no longer do those things, those
2 things are now overseas and we don't expect those jobs
3 to come back. I will give you a for-instance. We
4 actually have a mobile training unit out here where
5 we're training 12 students in CNC operations. We're
6 having a difficult time finding folks that want to,
7 number one, go into the manufacturing industry because
8 of the image problem that we've had for the last five
9 to ten years. There are jobs available. We are
10 placing almost a 70 percent rate of folks who go
11 through a two-week CNC training program, and there are
12 jobs available. The main thrust of this, when it comes
13 to the industry initiatives, is that if we can do a
14 better job at collaborating with our partners for job
15 openings, training possibilities, things of that
16 nature, it makes it easier, it makes our job easier
17 placing folks in the manufacturing field. Although, if
18 you look at the numbers, currently we have 56,000 jobs
19 that are open in the field and they are looking at that
20 number by 2014 going down to 50,000. Those are 50,000
21 higher-than-average wage skilled jobs that will be
22 providing employment opportunities and a lot of other
23 living opportunities for Rhode Islanders.

24 We do have a very serious problem with
25 students coming out of high school who are not prepared

1 with their math or English skills, and that is an issue
2 that is going to have to be addressed. We are trying
3 to take and work with students who are not on the
4 college track but are also not going to the career tech
5 programs and are not doing well in the math and
6 sciences. If we can get students who are better
7 capable when they graduate from high school, there will
8 be manufacturing jobs available, I can assure you of
9 that.

10 Other than that, I'm very supportive of
11 the industry initiatives, I've been working with
12 workforce development and training in the State of
13 Rhode Island for almost thirteen years now and this is
14 one of the most comprehensive plans that I have seen
15 rolled out, and if we can make even a half to
16 three-quarters of this work, I think we've done a good
17 job with that. Thank you.

18 MR. O'HARE: Thank you for your comment.
19 Dottie Miller representing the Workforce Partnership of
20 Greater Rhode Island.

21 MS. MILLER: Good morning, Dottie Miller,
22 the acting executive director of the Workforce
23 Partnership of Greater Rhode Island, and I want to say
24 that I applaud your efforts, I think the Workforce
25 Partnership is very supportive of the plan and has

1 worked to align what this organization does along with
2 the efforts that you're making. I think in retrospect
3 when you look at what people are saying today, you see
4 the same thing, and the challenges in the workforce
5 that Providence/Cranston described and that our
6 industry partners described. I think the most dynamic
7 initiative is the industry partnership initiatives that
8 can help us to look at training, content, to look at
9 ways to take the populations that we serve, and the
10 challenges and the limited skills that they have, and
11 work together with industry to bring them into viable
12 employment. I hope we can work with you in the future
13 on that.

14 MR. O'HARE: Thank you for your comment.
15 If there is no further comments, thank you for coming.
16 We do have to stay through 12 o'clock, in case someone
17 else does come, and you do have until tomorrow, close
18 of business, which will be 4 o'clock, to submit a
19 written comment if you wish to do so. Thank you.

20 (OFF THE RECORD, 10:37 a.m. - 12:00 noon)

21 MR. O'HARE: It is 12:00 and we have no
22 new testimony, so we will close the hearing.

23 (HEARING CLOSED AT 12:00 NOON)

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CERTIFICATE

I, MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, Notary Public, do hereby
certify that the foregoing is a true, accurate, and
complete transcript of my notes taken at the
above-entitled proceeding.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this
17th day of April, 2007.

MELANIE M. CHACE, RPR, NOTARY PUBLIC

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 04/07/11

IN RE: WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan**Rhode Island****1. Public Comments Submitted by:****Diane Cook****2. Represents Agency or Organization:****Department of Human Services****3. Date Submitted:****December 31, 2006****4. Response:**

The written statement received from the commenter on December 31, 2006 was read into the public record of the hearing conducted on April 16, 2007 on the Draft State Plan.

- **The commenter requests that the public workforce system focus its efforts on placing workers for those 58% of jobs in 2012 that are projected to**

require on-the-job-training (OJTs) and those 14.2% of jobs in 2012 that are projected to require short-term vocational training or prior work experience.

Response:

The WIA/Wagner Peyser Law and Regulations require universal access; therefore, while public dollars are directed at the population of concern expressed by the commenter that will benefit most from OJTs and short term training, there must also be initiatives for displaced workers and employers. In addition, demand industries and vital economic sectors that are driving the engine of economic development and job growth in the State are in need of highly skilled workers.

- **The commenter requests that the public workforce system focus its resources on clients that are already receiving public funds in order to maximize the benefit of its training investment by moving client support from public dollars to private dollars as soon as possible.**

Response:

The Plan is generally supportive of the expenditure of public funds to “transition individuals from public dollars to private dollars.” Particular concern for the population of those currently being served with public dollars was expressed under the Part II, Section II Priorities –Low Wage/Low Skill & Adult Basic Education Initiatives.

- **The commenter requests that the public workforce system needs to undertake strategic planning that lead to integration of “sister agencies” and other non-profits into a greater workforce system. An interagency**

group, consisting of key representatives of members of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, would develop a plan that would commit resources from the many funding streams to achieve its economic and workforce development vision.

Response:

The overarching strategy of the State Plan is to align all of the State's governance and workforce resources to support the economic well being of all Rhode Islanders (Exhibit No. 1 – Governor's Executive Order and Section V of the Plan). Issues of integration of public/private services raised by the commenter could best be presented by the Department of Human Services in the forum provided under the auspices of the Workforce Cabinet. Members of the Workforce Cabinet are integral to the upcoming strategic planning process being facilitated by The Corporation for a Skilled Workforce.

- **The commenter notes that the One-Stop Career Centers have not cornered the market on Labor Exchange; therefore, the One-Stop Career Centers should focus their resources on its "niche market—the people who need it most."**

Response:

It is the goal of the Rhode Department of Labor and Training to be the primary deliverer of workforce services in the State. The Department of Labor and Training has issued an RFP to procure a Case Management and Reporting System to be utilized by One-Stop staff, jobseekers and employers. While the State does not mandate that all job openings be funneled through the current MIS System, the procured system will add functionality that "spiders" well known national and local job banks to expand the client's access to all job opportunities and other services provided by non-profit agencies (Part II, Section IX,

A. 1.) In addition, there are links to several national job bank sites through the RI Red System.

**WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan
Rhode Island**

1. Public Comments Submitted by:

Linda Katz

2. Represents Agency or Organization:

Poverty Institute, Rhode Island College

3. Date Submitted:

March 7, 2007

4. Response:

The written statement received from the commenter on March 7, 2007 was read into the public record of the hearing conducted on April 16, 2007 on the Draft State Plan.

Changes were made to the Draft Plan where appropriate prior to the Plans approval by the Planning and Evaluation Committee of the Governor's Workforce Board on April 10, 2007.

- **The commenter requests that the RI Department of Education be included on the State Workforce Investment Board as a member.**

Response:

Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of Rhode Island's workforce development system has been a hallmark of both the Governor's Administration and the General Assembly. In 2005, the State successfully obtained a waiver from the Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor in an effort to streamline the federally mandated State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). The waiver effectively provided relief from the unwieldy membership requirements proscribed by federal regulation. In conjunction with the waiver, the Governor's Executive Order #05-18 and subsequent amendments to the RI Human Resource Investment Council statute essentially merged the two entities, thus creating the Governor's Workforce Board. This reorganization, now in its second year, has laid the foundation for more effective workforce development planning, resource alignment and decision-making at the highest level.

The federal Workforce Investment Act, from which the State sought the waiver, is presently before Congress for reauthorization. Each of the several versions being considered includes changes to the mandatory membership of State Workforce Investment Boards. However, it is not clear at this time exactly what those changes will be. In the wake of reauthorization the State will likely need to amend the statute and executive order in order to preserve the improvements gained by the recent reorganization. Therefore, the Department respectfully recommends waiting until the reauthorization process has completed before considering changes to the board's composition.

The GWB waiver request represents the Governor's vision with regard to the inclusion of educational representation on the Board at this time. The Governor has included the Office of Higher Education.

The plan references "Low skilled/Low Income Workforce Initiatives" under State Workforce Priorities (Section II), but there should be more of a focus on workers with low literacy and ESOL.

- **The commenter request that there be a greater focus on workers with low literacy and ESOL. The State Plan should be modified as follows:**
The state's strategic economic development goals for attracting, retaining and growing business and industry should include strengthening and expanding the adult education system to increase the pool of Rhode Island adults who are ready to participate in the "innovation agenda". The Office of Adult Education within RIDE should be included as one of the "entities" that has been established to help institutionalize and sustain the innovation agenda (Section 1, A)

Response:

The Office of Adult Education within RIDE was included as one of the "entities" that has been established to help institutionalize and sustain the innovation agenda (Part II, Section 1, A)

- **Section I, B should include as a priority "efforts to link adults without a high school diploma and adults with limited English proficiency to appropriate adult education programs" and "efforts to encourage employers to help employees in need of ESOL or adult education to obtain those services"**

The language requested was included as requested (Part II, Section 1, B).

- **The One-Stop Centers should increase focus on linking job-seekers and incumbent workers who have low literacy or English language skills with programs that can address these barriers to higher-wage jobs. Materials should highlight the importance of literacy and ESOL, counselors should emphasize this, information about ESOL and literacy programs should be easily available, etc. Sections of the plan that describe how services are delivered at the One-Stops, and how services to “specific populations” are delivered should describe actions that will be taken to link workers with literacy, GED and ESOL services.**

Response:

The Governor’s Workforce Board allocated \$450,000 to the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Adult Education to build capacity in the One-Stops Career Centers to provide Adult Basic Education, ESOL and other skills training services in Woonsocket, Pawtucket and Providence that will allow clients in need of these skills to be put on a career pathway. In Providence, for example, approximately 400 people per year can not be placed in training because of basic skill deficiencies. These individuals would now be able to access the Skill Tutor Program with the assistance of a resource person provided by a contract through CCRI or other vendors so that customers can access a career pathway. Career pathways are being developed with the Industry Partnerships (Demand Occupations) so that there is a clear knowledge of the skill levels needed by occupation and sector. The Industry Partners are working with the Local Workforce Areas to ensure that the basic skill levels obtained through this program will be accepted

for entry level positions by sector. This item is referenced in Part II, Section VI, B under “One-Stop Restructuring”.

- **The commenter requests strategies be put in place to improve job services for adults entering the workforce system through the DHS “door”.**

For families receiving cash assistance from the Family Independence Program (FIP), the Department of Human Services is the “door” to preparing for and finding work. These are adults who should be a high priority for state strategies and investments to become workers in the “innovation economy”. An investment in these families is not only an investment in the parent as a member of the current workforce, but an investment in the children as the future workforce.

Strategies to improve job services for “FIP parents” that should be included in the plan are: Training by One-Stop staff for DHS social case workers who are working with FIP parents to develop employment plans so that appropriate referrals to the One Stop can be made and so that DHS staff are skilled at using information on the One Stop website (e.g., LMI data) to help parents craft appropriate plans. Identification of specialists at the One-Stop centers to whom FIP parents can be referred for services, including referral of parents who have “timed off” of FIP and are no longer eligible to receive employment services from DHS. Create a link between the Employer Service Representatives, the DHS staff and also with programs providing job readiness/job search services to FIP parents, so that when an employer has a job order, this information is provided directly to DHS staff and community-providers.

Response:

This issue is addressed in Part II, Section III, Paragraph A.2. In addition, providing services to FIP clients should be addressed by the Unified Planning process currently underway and being facilitated by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce.

- **Include strategies that help lower-wage workers access work supports. Helping adults with low wages to access benefits such as Food Stamps, child care assistance, health insurance and the Earned Income Tax credit can help stabilize that person’s employment. As a strategy for “supporting human capital solutions” (Section VII E) we suggest that the Employer Service Representatives be provided information to share with employers regarding eligibility for these programs. The ESRs could help employers develop ways of disseminating information to their employees and advising employees about resources in the community that can help them access these benefits.**
In addition, information about these benefits should be available at the One-Stop Centers and counselors should advise customers about them. Finally, the Rapid Response team should also be prepared to inform employees about accessing these benefits.

Response:

Information on many of the referenced work supports to assist lower wage workers are provided to employers and jobseekers within the One-Stop Career Centers, in Rapid Response Orientations, and by staff in the Employer Services Unit. Information on the Earned Income Tax Credit can be added.

**WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan
Rhode Island**

1. Public Comments Submitted by:

Robert Ricci, Administrator

2. Represents Agency or Organization:

Workforce Solutions of Providence and Cranston

4. Date Submitted:

April 16, 2007

4. Response:

Oral statement was made at the Public Hearing held on April 16, 2007.

- **The commenter supported the State Plan and detail some data relative to the importance of Adult Basic Education, ESOL, and other training to the constituents utilizing the public workforce system in the Cities of Providence and Cranston.**

No response was necessary.

**WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan
Rhode Island**

1. Public Comments Submitted by:

Dottie Miller, Acting Administrator

2. Represents Agency or Organization:

Workforce Partnership of Greater RI

5. Date Submitted:

April 16, 2007

4. Response:

Oral statement was made at the Public Hearing held on April 16, 2007.

- **The commenter supported the State Plan and detail issues and programs relative to the Greater Rhode Island Workforce Investment Area.**

No response was necessary.

WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan**Rhode Island****1. Public Comments Submitted by:**

**Timothy Hebert, Chairman & President of the Tech
Collective & Atrion, Inc.**

2. Represents Agency or Organization:

Tech Collective- 120 Technology Employers

6. Date Submitted:

April 16, 2007

4. Response:

Oral statement was made at the Public Hearing held on April 16, 2007.

- **The commenter express support for the demand driven aspect of the Workforce Investment Plan. The commenter detail the problems in the industry finding human resources with skills; the lack of youth leaving secondary school going into math/science/engineering/technology career fields in college. The definition of entry level (referring to entry level out of college) today is changing from the industry point of view and the school systems are not keeping up with the changing demands of the industry. Industry is growing 20% a year but the lack of a skilled workforce is a problem.**

No response necessary.

WIA/Wagner-Peyser 2 Year Plan**Rhode Island****1. Public Comments Submitted by:**

Leslie Taito, CEO RI Manufacturer Education Services

2. Represents Agency or Organization:

RI Manufacturing Association and RIMES- 500

Manufacturing Employers

7. Date Submitted:

April 16, 2007

4. Response:

Oral statement was made at the Public Hearing held on April 16, 2007.

- **The commenter pointed out that manufacturing employs 57,000 individuals in Rhode Island and all manufacturing jobs are not going overseas. Those that are growing demand high skill individuals. There is a public image of manufacturing that does not represent the transformation taking place in the industry. New and good paying jobs are being created but they depend upon high skill worker. The commenter stress the importance of industry partnerships and initiatives to address public perceptions of the opportunities in the Sector.**

No response necessary.

