



The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

February 18, 2013

Dear Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of the National Transitional Jobs Network – a national coalition dedicated to getting chronically unemployed Americans back to work which is made up of thousands of employment, training and service providers, anti-poverty, workforce, reentry, and homelessness advocates, researchers, and government officials - we thank you for your leadership in advancing efforts to modernize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) through the introduction of the Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (H.R.798).

Much has changed since the Workforce Investment Act was passed in 1998. The economic gains of the latter part of the last century have been diluted, if not erased, by the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. The result of massive job losses across sectors has been high and prolonged unemployment for millions of workers. Many of our nation's jobseekers have been chronically unemployed long before the last economic recession began and continue to be disproportionately represented in unemployment figures. Among them are newly returning veterans, youth, those with fewer skills and education, minorities and many others. The ranks of the long-term unemployed continue to swell and their lengthy tenure of unemployment threatens to establish a new cohort of chronically unemployed Americans.

This new economic reality offers fresh perspective about the role of our public workforce system and informs our understanding of how it can best respond today and in the future to the needs of job seekers, communities, and employers. Indeed, we believe that the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act presents an opportunity to reinforce and put into place measures to ensure that our nation's public workforce system works for all – especially our nation's jobseekers who experience chronic unemployment. The National Transitional Jobs Network (NTJN) has recommended that any Workforce Investment Act reauthorization proposal:

- Invest in the nation's public workforce development and training system through flexible, responsive, and adequate resources to meet the employment needs of all job seekers.
- Adopt statutory principles and goals that reflect a commitment to access to employment, education, and training opportunities for all – especially adults and youth with barriers to employment.
- Include a comprehensive definition of the term "individuals with barriers to employment" as defined by the National Transitional Jobs Network. Preserve effective solutions that support the unique employment and training needs of these populations

including low-income older adults, youth, women, minorities, individuals with a history of arrest, charge or conviction and other chronically unemployed individuals.

- Include Transitional Jobs programs as an allowable use of training funds and define each of the components of the Transitional Jobs model as allowable uses of WIA funds.
- Prioritize services for low-income individuals with barriers to employment when WIA grant funds are limited.
- Allow for WIA funds to be used to provide supportive services such as transportation, dependent care, and other needs-based payments when participants are unable to find or receive services in the community from another source.
- Foster coordination and alignment among workforce, education, and training programs by removing disincentives and burdens around leveraging funds, implementing programs, and tracking performance outcomes of concurrent or blended earn and learn strategies such as blended Transitional Jobs and contextualized adult basic education and training programs.
- Adopt a performance accountability system that takes into account the economic conditions and characteristics of program participants and includes interim measures of progress toward obtaining employment, training, and education goals.

We deeply appreciate your attention to these recommendations in the drafting of the Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (H.R.798). We know that without access to employment, education, training, and supports the growing numbers of Americans facing chronic unemployment will be permanently disconnected from the labor market contributing to the erosion of American families and communities and weakening American economic competitiveness. The Workforce Investment Act of 2013 (H.R.798) makes great strides in ensuring that our public workforce system works for all and that all jobseekers can contribute to America's economic competitiveness.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on Education and the Workforce to advance these priorities. Questions or requests for more information can be directed to Melissa Young at myoung@heartlandalliance.org.

Sincerely,



Melissa Young
Associate Director
National Transitional Jobs Network
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
www.transitionaljobs.net

CC:

The Honorable Rubén Hinojosa
The Honorable John Tierney