



# GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL

## Governor's Workforce Council

October 19, 2023

Minutes are unapproved

### Council Members Present:

Mark Argosh; Kelli-Marie Vallieres; Amy Porter; Charlene Russell-Tucker; George Anderson for Brian Doubles; Mark Polzella for Dante Bartolomeo; Jeff Auker; Joseph Gianni; Kathleen Silard; Michelle James; Monette Ferguson; Ray Pineault; Sal Menzo; Shawn Coyne; Steve Sullivan; Anthony Medici; Kyle Ballou for Chris OConnor; Mike Pruddin for Cindi Bigelow; Erika Smith; Jeff Auker; John Murphy Dr.; Lillian Brough for Leticia Colon de Mejias; Martin Guay; Gladis Kersaint for Radenka Maric; Shawn Coyne; Shellye Davis; Rai Kathuria for Terrence Cheng

### Council Members Absent:

Alexandra Daum; Chris DiPentima; Ed Hawthorne; Jay Williams; Jeffrey Flaks; Judy Olian; Keri Hoehne; Leslie Torres-Rodriguez; Maggie Hulce; Molly Kellogg; Neil O'Leary; Paul Costello; Peter Nystrom; Peter Salovey; Rohan Freeman; Shane Eddy; Sharon Barr; Suresh Muthuswami; Tiana Ocasio; Toni Walker; Tywanda Talley-Rushing; Wes Alexander

Chair Argosh calls the meeting to order at 2:32pm and provides opening remarks.

Governor Ned Lamont opening remarks at 2:36

Chair Argosh reviews the issues to be voted on.

1. July 20, 2023 Minutes
2. Proposed GWC Quarterly Meeting dates for 2024
  1. Preferred GWC Quarterly Meeting time

Chair Argosh calls the committee to vote at 2:43 p.m. Committee motions to vote on two items, motion to vote made by John Murphy, seconded by Shelley Davis. No discussion.

### VOTES

1. July 20,2023 Governor's Workforce Meeting Minutes,
2. Proposed GWC Quarterly Meeting dates for 2024
3. Item 3 is an unofficial request to identify the preferred GWC Quarterly Meeting time preference, results below

Item	Yay	Nay	Abstentions	Result	
1) July 20,2023 Governor's Workforce Meeting Minutes	25	0	0	<i>Motion passes at 2:53pm</i>	
2) Proposed GWC Quarterly Meeting dates for 2024	25	0	0	<i>Motion passes at 2:53pm</i>	
3) Preferred GWC Quarterly Meeting time preference	0 – Early Morning	2 – Mid Morning	14 – Late Afternoon	8 – No Preference	Late Afternoon

Voting concludes at 2:53 p.m.



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## **Chair Argosh asks Vice-Chair Kelli Vallieres to provide the OWS Report at 2:53 p.m.**

- Updates on Good Jobs Challenge – All contracts executed, and training now under way with a number of grantees.
- Central State Connecticut University to host a in-person Regional Sector Partnership Convening on January 11, 2024 at SCSU's innovation center.
- Approximately 70,000 job seekers have been served by multiple levels of service through the American Job Centers and workforce boards through DOL through the community college CTE state system and higher ed partners across the state.
- Workforce boards, in partnership with community colleges and other providers have trained over 8,000 people this year. Community Colleges have provided a 35,030 500 credit certificates with approximately 6,000 people participating at any given time in non-credit programs supported by Career ConneCT and the \$70 million investment by Governor Lamont and the General Assembly.
- Department of Labor currently serving approximately 6,400 active apprentices with almost half of them under the age of 25.
- Skills mismatch - A lot of the jobs that were lost during the pandemic are those higher-level jobs and some of the mid-level jobs, but we are at almost full employment in those categories. A need exists to look at students that are coming out of school and those who have not historically participated in a meaningful way in career ladders within Connecticut, diligently between the Good Jobs Challenge, Career ConneCT, and other academic partners to address this.
- Career Pathways Program – OWS is working very closely with CSCU, CT state and other academic partners to build out Career Pathway Programs and dual credit to expand work based learning opportunities, emphasizing skills-based hiring. The State Department of Ed with CT State along with OWS and DOL did a marathon application for a national grant from the Department of Education to build out the Career Pathway Programs. If awarded, the grant, \$1.4 million per year over three years will be a way for us to continue to build out these important career pathway programs to help students enter meaningful employment. Through the leadership of SDE, we are working to create more seamless pathway from K12 to higher education and work by enabling students to take college coursework while still in high school.

## **Vice-Chair Kelli Vallieres introduces the New England Board of Higher Education President Michael Thomas, Director of Policy and Research Katie Singer, and Jeff Walker, Infosys Associate Vice President and head of Innovation Delivery to present the Tech Talent Accelerator 2.0 at 3:06 p.m.**

- Tech Talent Accelerator 2.0 - announced 6 recipients of the second phase of the Tech Talent Accelerator 2.0: We have Charter Oak State College, Southern Connecticut State College, University of Connecticut on the Stanford campus, Fairfield University, Albertus Magnus college and Connecticut College and they are to focused on building brand new pathways around cloud computing, cybersecurity, and the healthcare field to focusing in bio informatics and applying those to the different industry needs across the state of Connecticut.
- Over 23 Connecticut based employers that are going to be partnering with this these institutions to address the technical tax talent needs of the state of Connecticut.
- Reach the New England Board of Higher Education at NEBHE.ORG for any questions or interested in getting involved

## **Vice-Chair Kelli Vallieres finishes OWS report**

- The Second Annual Workforce Summit will convene on April 16, 2024, at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville. Co-hosts include CBIA ReadyCT, SVP, OWS, DOL, SDE, DECF, DAS, CSCU and CT State.



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Efforts are being made to ensure anyone experiencing barriers of transportation or otherwise will be able to contact OWS and be provided opportunities to ensure the meeting is accessible to everyone.

- Announces annual awards event in the works: Governor Lamont's inaugural Workforce Partnership Award. More to come as the details of nominations of those best practices and workforce partnerships across the state.

## **Chair Argosh introduces member of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel: Commissioner of Early Childhood Beth Bye, Vice President of Electric Boat Human Resources and General Dynamics, and Executive Director of Alliance for Community Empowerment Dr. Monette Ferguson at 3:18 p.m.**

- Commissioner Beth Bye discusses challenges faced by childcare providers and families in Connecticut, including high costs, affordability issues, and chronic underfunding. Families face high costs for childcare, with parents paying a disproportionate amount compared to their mortgage. Highlights the impact of workforce issues on childcare, and businesses affected by the workforce shortage, as they struggle to find qualified candidates.
- Commissioner Bye explained the work the Blue-Ribbon Panel Plan is doing to address these issues through listening sessions and strategic planning. The panel aims to make significant progress in generational childcare reform by way of a five-year strategic plan to continue to both expand access for families, stabilize the industry and make sure that professionals are paid appropriately, and the workforce of the future is being built with high quality settings as those early years set the stage for both school and life success as well as well-being and emotional health. The Blue-Ribbon Panel held public hearings and adapted a plan over 4 months, now updated with 4 goals: invest in workforce, equitable access, data systems, and community-based decision making.
- Dr. Ferguson emphasizes childcare being the foundation of employment across the world and the importance of addressing the living wage issue for early childhood educators. Workforce development is crucial, with a focus on attracting and retaining early childhood educators. Parents and families are seeking access to quality childcare programs with affordable options. The Blue-Ribbon Panel hosted several listening sessions across the State on focus groups and surveys with keen connected parents. The outcome: a need for access and opportunity- to access an opportunity at night to any childcare program with quality childcare that will help children excel.
- Sean Coyne discusses the workforce in Groton and childcare affordability for working families in a shipyard. Details the need for early drop-off and support options being crucial for families.
- Commissioner Beth Bye discusses the state's plan to stabilize childcare providers and expand access to care.

## **Chair Argosh introduces Anthony Barrett, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the Office of Workforce Strategy, to facilitate the second panel: CT State Colleges President John Maduko, Commissioner of Department of Aging and Disability Services Amy Porter, Department of Developmental Services Commissioner Jordan Scheff, and CEO of InCord Meredith Ritz Shay on National Disability Employment Awareness Month at 3:46 p.m.**

- President of CT State Community College shares personal experience as Autism parent and advocate. Discusses how education institutions can better prepare students with disabilities for the transition to the workforce and ensure the necessary skills and support systems by involving students with disabilities in career planning and creating tailored pathways to the workforce. Emphasizes how institutions of higher education should work closely with students to



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understand their ambitions and create applicable career plans. Emphasizes the importance of advocating for acceptance of people with disabilities in the workplace, rather than just raising awareness. Highlights the importance of collaboration between educational institutions and businesses to create more employment opportunities for graduates with disabilities. Discusses how advocacy for students with disabilities in the workplace requires updating employers on inclusive hiring practices and investing in employee development. Highlights the importance of disability representative representation in all employment levels, emphasizing that individuals with disabilities be included in shaping policy and department direction.

- Commissioner Jordan Sheff touches on goals to help individuals with intellectual disability acquire quality jobs for quality wages. Discusses barrier myths and preexisting assumptions employers face when hiring individuals with disabilities. Highlights the incredible value hiring individuals with disabilities brings to the workforce, increasing diversity and morale, including high rates of reliability for attendance and performance. Commissioner Sheff also highlights Walgreen's inclusive hiring practices, with 50% of employees having disabilities and accommodations made without changing expectations. Emphasizes acceptance and inclusivity as key to recognizing and valuing employees with disabilities in the workplace.
- Commissioner Amy Porter emphasizes the importance of inclusive policy and programming in Vocational Rehabs, moving away from separate pipelines and towards a more systematic approach to meet individual and business needs. Highlights the value of hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities, addressing common misconceptions and emphasizing the business benefits of a diverse workforce. Commissioner Porter also discusses common misconceptions about disability accommodations. Suggests employers challenge these misconceptions/existing stereotypes including the cost of accommodations and the inclusivity of job posting templates to create a supportive environment for employees with visible disabilities.
- CEO of InCord, Meredith Shay emphasizes the need for organizations to prioritize training and adapting to accommodate individuals with disabilities and valuing their contributions as cultural ambassadors and relationship managers. Highlights the need for employees to prioritize training and advancement for employees with disabilities, the importance of skills-based wages, promoting from within, and wages based on tenure and skill level.

## **Breakouts**

- Anthony Barrett introduces Kelli Valleries for the Breakout discussions: Skills Alignment led by Jeff Auker, Associate Vice President, Head of Innovation and Delivery, Hartford, Infosys, Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Chief Workforce Officer, Office of Workforce Strategy; Childcare led by Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood; Persons with Disabilities led by Anthony Barrett, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, OWS, Robin Sharp, President & CEO, Easterseals Capital Region & Eastern Connecticut, Inc.

## **Report Outs**

### *Skills Alignment: Jeff Auker*

- Discussed needs of training programs and employer engagement to unlock potential of the workforce particularly for upskilling and rescaling
- The need for commitment, and genuine interest from employers regarding accommodation needs
- Program funding
- Creating an environment where individuals can learn and contribute

### *Childcare: Commissioner Beth Bye*

- Challenges around out of school time and data gaps



- Childcare deserts
- Challenges with zoning barriers and strategies for improvement
- Need for better data to provide insights and reports
- Possibility of leveraging resources in the state

*Persons with Disabilities: Anthony Barrett*

- Accommodations and when individuals disclose disabilities and needs
- Helping young adults understand accommodations and advocate for their rights
- Neurodivergent employees and how to create an inclusive environment
- Interview models and strategies to remove barriers and find peoples strengths
- Allyship programs and flexible attendance policies
- Partnerships in hiring persons with disabilities.

**Chair Argosh thanks everyone for joining the meeting and for their time.**

Mark reminds every one of the next GWC meeting on February 22, 2024.

**Meeting concludes at 4:56 p.m.**

DRAFT