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- News Release -

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christie Administration Hosts Conference to Shape Vision for New Jersey's Workforce System

*Revamped Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act broadens access to employment,
training services*

TRENTON, April 02, 2015 – The Christie Administration hosted a conference bringing together 300 workforce professionals including state and national experts to craft New Jersey's talent development vision and work toward implementing the newly revamped Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – known as WIOA, which supplants and enhances the older Workforce Investment Act. The two-day *Pathways and Partnerships* conference held at Mercer Community College in West Windsor included workshops, seminars and panel discussions centered on creating pathways to help all people build skills and connections to find jobs and careers.

“The new WIOA legislation builds on the existing programs and partnerships we have established here in New Jersey to align our training programs with the essential skills employers have identified and to focus resources on the leading industries in the Garden State,” said Commissioner Harold J. Wirths of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. “My department’s re-employment programs and our industry-focused labor market information, as well as the Talent Networks we created representing key industry clusters that employ more than two-thirds of New Jersey workers and pay more than two-thirds of the

state's annual wages will lead the way in providing our workforce with the tools they need to successfully navigate pathways for a sustainable job or career.”

WIOA is historic federal legislation that received bipartisan support to streamline existing federal workforce development programs, provide increased flexibility for states and their local workforce boards by reducing burdensome federal mandates, and strengthen accountability for taxpayer dollars. New Jersey's workforce development system makeover is set to take effect over the next 18 months beginning July 1, 2015.

The conference, hosted in partnership with the State Employment and Training Commission, featured a “talking wall” which gave participants an opportunity to share their ideas by placing post-it notes under posters with topics covered during the working sessions or by tweeting thoughts and ideas with the hashtag NJWIOA.

“This conference elevated New Jersey's implementation of WIOA and will take it to the next level,” said Michele Boronkas, executive director of the State Employment and Training Commission. “The SETC is committed to working with its partners and stakeholders which is vital to the success of job-seekers and employers in this next generation of workforce development.”

WIOA legislation ensures workers get the skills to meet the needs of employers for 21st century jobs which in turn make employers more competitive. WIOA requires a new level of program alignment, coordination of services, and integrated strategic planning for core programs for adult, youth and dislocated workers; adult education and literacy; vocational rehabilitation; and Wagner-Peyser, which established the one-stop delivery system. The updated law also provides supports for people with disabilities to enter and remain in competitive, integrated jobs promoting a contemporary workforce that businesses rely on to compete.

“New Jersey's workforce development system serves more than a quarter of a million people annually. The Pathways and Partnerships conference is one of many steps my department is taking to gain input to strengthen our workforce system through programs that help to reduce the time job-seekers are unemployed; decrease the number of people on government assistance; increase the number of people with industry-valued credentials and degrees; and ensure the investments we make are effective,” said Commissioner Wirths.

For more information about New Jersey's WIOA plan, questions or to share suggestions:

Go to: <http://lwd.state.nj.us/labor/wioa>

Email: WIOABlueprint@dol.state.nj.us



The New Jersey Labor Department's Pathways and Partnerships conference held at Mercer County Community College asked participants to share their ideas about how to successfully implement the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act during work sessions. This new historic legislation replaces the outdated Workforce Investment Act and received overwhelming bipartisan support.