



New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Philip D. Murphy, *Governor*

State Employment and Training Commission Meeting Minutes

June 25, 2020 ~ 10 am – 11:30 am

Online (GoTo Meeting Platform)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chairman Dennis Bone called the meeting to order at 10:00am and welcomed members and guests. He announced that, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1978, notice of this meeting was submitted to the Trenton Times and Star Ledger and was posted on the SETC website, njsetc.net. Online attendee introductions were conducted. Mr. Bone thanked the members of SETC for their incredible work in trying to get the best outcomes possible during these times. The draft minutes of the February 26, 2020 meeting were presented. Linda Eno made a motion to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Tapas Sen. The minutes were approved by voice vote, with John Franklin abstaining.

II. Chairman's Update

Chairman Bone reviewed the meeting agenda; anyone wishing to use public comment time at the end of the meeting was asked to alert the Chairman to reserve time towards the end of the meeting. There were no requests. Chairman Bone then introduced New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, to provide an update on departmental activity in response to the pandemic.

III. NJDOL Update:

Commissioner Asaro-Angelo began by addressing the incredible strain COVID-19 has had on working residents in New Jersey, resulting in inconsistent incomes for many families. NJ has provided 8.2 billion dollars in benefits to 1.3 million claims so far. This follows a period of record low unemployment for New Jersey prior to the crisis. While operating under this burden, NJDOL has not lost sight of its ground-breaking achievements, including: the two-year apprenticeship program now showing a 54 percent increase; additional programs for employer support; new programs to address the opioid epidemic; increasing summer youth programs and building broad partnerships. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo reported that as of July 13, One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs) will begin offering limited services on an appointment-only basis. Safety measures have been put in place to protect staff and clients. Unemployment services will not be offered in the OSCCs at this time, nor in the foreseeable future. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo reported that 100 new claim specialists and staff from other agencies and departments (working both remotely and in offices) have been added and are being positioned where needed for handling unemployment claims in large batches. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo thanked Assistant Commissioner Gary Karr and the Administrative Services team for their

assistance during this challenging time. Chairman Bone thanked the Commissioner for sharing these important updates.

Labor Market Insights:

Assistant Commissioner Lesley Hirsch provided a presentation demonstrating the impact of COVID-19 on New Jersey's labor market. Nearly 1.3 million unemployment claims have been filed and federal and state benefit payouts have risen to \$8.2 billion. Although the number of claims vary each week, about 28 percent of New Jersey's workforce filed claims between March 15th and June 20th. Ms. Hirsch shared some characteristics of UI claimants who filed during this period;

- *Gender:* 53.7% of claimants were female
- *Race:* 60% of claimants were white
- *Ethnicity:* 68% were Non-Hispanic
- *Educational Attainment:* 34.4% were high school graduates
- *Age:* most age groups ranged at about 18%; but those aged 25-34 were 22.4% of claimants
- *Occupation:* most claimants worked in service occupations, particularly food service.

Assistant Commissioner Hirsch indicated that employment was down 45 percent among low-income workers in NJ and this group is slower to rebound as reopening has begun. Spending in NJ was also down by 40 percent at the beginning of April, with the biggest impact on services such as restaurants, hotels and airlines, especially among those with higher incomes. The finance and professional services sectors experienced lesser decreases in spending. Asst. Commissioner Hirsch referenced a summary by Raj Chetty, Director of Opportunity Insights at Harvard University. Those interested in more economic information related to COVID may visit the Opportunity Insights economic tracker website, tracktherecovery.org. Chairman Bone thanked Ms. Hirsch for her informative presentation.

IV. New Jersey – Open for Business:

Insights from NJ Business and Organization Impact Study, June 2020:

Chairman Bone introduced Director Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D. from the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. Dr. Van Horn thanked Chairman Bone for the invitation to present his survey at the meeting. His presentation began with Insights from NJ Business and Organization COVID-19 Impact Survey, which the Heldrich Center conducted from May 21 - June 3, 2020.

Dr. Van Horn reported that the survey was distributed through industries, chambers of commerce and social media, and was restricted to businesses and non-profits who make operational decisions; it was conducted in both English and Spanish. Of the 3,800 responses, most have less than 10 employees and have been in business for at least 10 years. Half of the survey samples were from women- or minority-owned businesses; 200 responses were from non-profits. The responses were evenly distributed across all of the state. Full survey results are available on the Governor's COVID-19 website and the Heldrich Center [website](#).

Dr. Van Horn noted that the survey includes populations of employers from all industries in the state. Survey responses by work environment showed that 56 percent work in customer-facing environments. Although 65 percent of businesses closed at some point, 50 percent were due to executive order and some businesses chose to close. Of the businesses and organizations that never closed, 84 percent are experiencing financial losses – 68 percent of respondents expect significant losses in the next few

months due to uncertainty about consumer confidence. To adjust for these losses, businesses are: using personal savings; increasing borrowing; reducing workers' hours; instituting layoffs/furloughs; and reducing employee compensation, benefits and freeze pay increases. Most respondents believe it will take at least 6 months to get back to pre-COVID revenue levels.

Dr. Van Horn addressed some challenges that businesses and organizations face in the reopening process. Most need greater than three-quarters of their workforce in-person to operate productively. For that to be possible, safety measures must be put into place including social distancing and sufficient PPE for employees and customers. Most respondents believe that guidance from state and national public health experts is an important factor to be able to comply with safety regulations and in avoiding potential liability issues. Dr. Van Horn thanked everyone for their attention and indicated that more information is available on the Heldrich Center website, <https://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/>.

Business Perspective

Chairman Bone introduced Michele Siekerka, President & CEO of NJ Business & Industry Association (NJBIA). Ms. Siekerka began by stating that NJBIA conducted a recovery survey with their members to gather data that would help provide resources and guidance to help businesses reopen, and ensure the reopening is sustainable. NJBIA has been working alongside a coalition of 80 business and nonprofit associations, advocating for policies on the state and federal level to provide employers relief and funding, and to aid in their recovery and reinvention. One recommended solution is for employers to purchase PPE supplies from manufacturers within New Jersey, as an opportunity to create more jobs and revenue for our state. NJBIA has also been hosting informational webinars to educate and share resources to approximately 30,000 New Jersey businesses.

Ms. Siekerka noted that the future of work post-COVID will see many challenges in filling skill gaps, and an increased need for employability skills, especially within remote work structures. Ms. Siekerka thanked the SETC for the opportunity to share this information, and indicated that NJBIA looks forward to working with the SETC to address these issues as businesses begin to reopen.

V. Education New Jersey:

NJ Department of Education

Chairman Bone introduced Linda Eno, NJDOE Assistant Commissioner for Academics and Performance and wished her well on her upcoming retirement. Ms. Eno thanked Chairman Bone and presented a timeline of recent educational impacts and responses in New Jersey's school system, including: a Coronavirus Task Force established on February 3; the closing of pre-K-12 schools on March 18 to continue remotely; private career and technical schools closed for in-person education and training as of March 21; and on May 4, Governor Murphy's announcement that all schools would remain closed for in-person instruction for the remainder of the school year. Turning the corner towards reopening, through executive order, child care services, youth day camps and organized sports resumed as of June 15, subject to compliance with COVID-19 health and safety standards. On June 18, an executive order allowed post-secondary in-person instruction to resume as of July 1, 2020, specifically for laboratory or clinical instruction. Asst. Commissioner Eno noted that this crisis has shined light on the equity gaps that always existed, particularly the digital divide, where a lack of device or connectivity is present, resulting in limited or no access to an online platform. Ms. Eno explained that the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was established to provide funding to school districts impacted by the closure of schools. Any use under Titles I, II, III

and IV are permissible. These funds include purchasing education technology for remote instruction, supplies for cleaning and supplemental instructional programs. Ms. Eno outlined guidance plans for reopening;

- Conditions for Learning (students have been impacted unevenly)
- Leadership and Planning (parents and stakeholders to be part of planning)
- Policy and Funding
- Continuity of Learning (establishing the new normal)

Ms. Eno concluded her presentation by emphasizing the importance that each district prioritize equitable access to technology. Ms. Eno introduced Erskine Glover, State Director of Career and Technical Education, who will be taking on her role for the Commissioner and will be the NJ DOE representative on the SETC. Mr. Glover thanked Ms. Eno and told the group that he is looking forward to working with the SETC.

NJ Higher Education

Chairman Bone introduced Tom Hilliard, Senior Advisor-NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. Mr. Hilliard outlined the restart standards for NJ Higher Education. The Governor issued Executive Order 155, creating standards for re-opening of degree-granting public and private schools of higher education when resuming in-person instruction and on-campus operations. His office is entering stage 2 of these restart standards and hopes to reach stage 3 in a matter of weeks. Mr. Hilliard presented key actions for maintaining safeguards for students, faculty and staff and restart plans. Institutions must work with local and state officials, their local health department and their emergency management teams, and will be required to submit a plan to OSHE for restarting operations following the State stages for reopening. Plans must be submitted 14 days in advance of implementation. Chairman Bone thanked Tom for his presentation about these critical efforts.

VI. NJ Combined State Plan for WIOA: Update

SETC Deputy Executive Director Sheryl Hutchison announced that the draft Combined State Plan for WIOA, presented at the February 26, 2020 meeting, was subsequently submitted to the US Department of Labor and the US Department of Education on March 26, 2020 and received approval, with one edit pending, from these Departments on June 22, 2020. Prior to approval, a number of compliance edits were made to the State Plan, at the direction of the federal reviewers. There were no changes to strategic or policy decisions; the edits were technical in nature and are highlighted in blue text in the updated Plan document, available on SETC home page: njsetc.net. A keyword search is recommended to find specific areas of interest in the Plan, since the document is 385 pages, and includes several pages of appendices. Ms. Hutchison offered sincere thanks and appreciation to the many state partners and the Plan authors, as well as the Heldrich Center, who helped to make this effort successful and create a strong plan for workforce development in New Jersey.

VII. Public Comment

There were no public comments offered. The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 am.

Next SETC Meeting:

Thursday, September 17, 2020

10am-12:00pm

GoTo Meeting Webinar (link to be provided)

ATTENDEES: June 25, 2020

PRESENT MEMBERS and ALTERNATES

Asaro-Angelo, Robert	Hilliard, Tom (for Smith Ellis)
Bone, Dennis	Johnson, Natasha (for Johnson, C.)
Butler, Kate (for Oliver)	Milone, Catherine
Colton, Tara (for Sullivan)	Nadler, Sally
Eno, Linda (for Repollet)	Safrin, Michele (for Blake)
Ferrera, Anthony	Sen, Tapas
Franklin, John	Wise, Robert
Gacos, Nicholas	

ABSENT MEMBERS

Brown, Kevin	Rice, Ronald
Carey, Michael	Wade, Carolyn Carter
Donnadio, John	Wilson, McKenzie
Duda, Teri	Wimberly, Benjie
Hornik, Stephen	Wowkanech, Charles
Reisser, Clifford	

OTHER ATTENDEES

Blatt, Michael	Meyer, Cheryl
Bocchieri, Mark	Miller, Howard
Custard, Donna	Ochse, Maureen
DeBaere, Gregg	Rawlins, Sharon
DeFilippo, Michelle	Sabir, Zahirah
Dombrowski, Joseph	Scalia, Donna
Gaylord, Karen	Schimanski, Torsten
Gerson, Amanda	Seith, David
Giordano, Timothy	Sheridan, Timothy
Glover, Erskine	Siekerka, Michele
Grzella, Paul	Starace, Jessica
Hala, Joanne	Sternbach, Larry
Hirsch, Lesley	Taylor, Yolanda
Howard, Donald	Thompson, Cheri
Jubanyik, Danielle	Threepersons, Dwight
Kurziel, Kevin	Van Horn, Carl
Lopez, Adalberto	Venkatraman, Raj
Levandowski, Andrea	Wolf, Linda

SETC STAFF:

Gary Altman
JoAnn Brooks
Sheryl Hutchison
Maureen O'Brien-Murphy
Courtney Santarsiero