



# New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Philip D. Murphy, *Governor*

## State Employment and Training Commission

### Meeting Minutes

June 2, 2021 ~ 10am – 12pm  
Online (GoTo Meeting Platform)

#### **I. Welcome & Introductions**

Chairman Dennis Bone called the meeting to order at 10:05am 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 the Star-Ledger and was posted on the SETC website, [njsetc.net](http://njsetc.net). In place of round-table introductions, members and guests were asked to place their names in the Chat feature for attendance purposes. The agenda was reviewed; time will be made available for public comment, if needed.

#### **II. Chairman's Report**

Chairman Bone highlighted the process underway to appoint new members to the SETC; the team continues the vetting of a number of new members for consideration by the Governor's office. The process is moving along, albeit a bit slowly. The SETC looks to move this forward as quickly as possible.

SETC Acting Executive Director Gary Altman discussed the SCALES (Literacy Council) efforts to coordinate a partner-convening this summer, themed as "Moving along Career Pathways Towards Family Sustaining Wages." The focus and goals of this effort include establishing and improving stakeholder dialogue related to the movement of the literacy population through both literacy and workforce systems. It will build off positive models and successful practices in use throughout the state, and it will look to maximize New Jersey's literacy ecosystem.

SETC Deputy Executive Director Sheryl Hutchison provided an update on the Local Workforce Development Board (WDB) Certification, 2020-2022 cycle. The SETC approved Policy #2020-02 for this cycle in November 2020. The submissions from local WDBs were due to the SETC in February 2021 and are currently being reviewed by the WDB staff. The Governance Committee will then review the completed applications and forward their recommendations to the full SETC for its consideration. While resources at both the state and local levels are stretched due to the COVID pandemic, the SETC remains committed to Local WDB Certification as a critical quality improvement activity. The process was streamlined with consideration for the demands currently placed on local staff. A few 2018 certifications were also pending approval due to small number of outstanding items; they will be finalized as soon as possible. Ms. Hutchison thanked the local WDBs who have already

responded, and those who are working to complete both the prior 2018 and the current 2020 certifications.

### ***Approval of Minutes:***

The draft minutes of the April 7, 2021 meeting were provided to the members in advance of today's meeting. Robert Wise made a motion to approve the minutes; Sally Nadler seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

### **III. NJDOL UPDATES:**

New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) Deputy Commissioner Paul Yuen shared information from the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, on behalf of Commissioner Asaro-Angelo. The rate of vaccinations continues to increase, and the number of COVID cases are down. Businesses are rapidly opening up, which is driving a lot of competition for workers. NJDOL expects this competition to ease up in the weeks and months ahead.

Deputy Commissioner Yuen noted that while individuals may face challenges when returning to work, such as finding childcare and other factors, it would be false to say that these people don't want to return to work. NJDOL has no intention of early stoppage of the enhanced federal benefits for workers claiming unemployment insurance (UI) benefits; these benefits are set to expire on September 4, 2021. Also, people have to return to work to replenish their eligibility for UI benefits. Deputy Commissioner Yuen indicated that it is better for claimants to work when they can, in order to ensure they have a record of base wages, rather than exhaust their UI benefits and not have the funds available when really needed.

A person is no longer eligible for UI benefits when they find suitable work. It is up to employers to report to NJDOL any instances where employees refuse to come to work, so that NJDOL agents can investigate. The employer can report these issues online through the NJDOL business portal, using their specific [Employer Access](#) account. After more than a year of shutdowns and layoffs, NJDOL has seen an increase in job seekers looking for services to secure a new job or obtain new skills. This is encouraging, as New Jersey has historically led the nation in workforce participation.

NJDOL has increased its Career Services programs to meet the increased jobseeker demand; the full menu of services and detailed information are available online at [careerservices.nj.gov](https://careerservices.nj.gov). The site offers free online learning courses through the new "SkillUp New Jersey" training program; more than 5,000 courses are available, and are offered in a number of languages. These courses are free to New Jersey residents, and range in scope from basic work readiness skills to training for high level professionals and managers. Deputy Commissioner Yuen recognized the work of the Middlesex County WDB and Greater Raritan WDB, who led the way in using the Skill Up Matrix platforms and engendered this being deployed statewide.

The Administration is investing in apprenticeship opportunities statewide, providing a means for workers to earn wages while they gain new skills. New Jersey has 1,062 apprenticeship programs, with 9,061 active apprentices, as of last week. This is a 74% increase in programs since Governor Murphy took office in January 2018, and represents significant progress that will positively impact New Jersey's workforce for years to come. NJDOL has posted 16 apprenticeship grant opportunities this year, to

support employers in creating apprenticeship programs. The Growing Apprenticeship in Non-traditional Sectors (GAINS) grants are part of this effort, and target under-represented populations; two-thirds of participants are women and minorities. The grant requires a \$16 per hour starting wage. Of the 70 applications received, 42 were funded in areas including manufacturing, health care, clothing, the trades, logistics and food industries.

NJDOL continues to work with employers to conform with masking and social distancing requirements. At the start of the pandemic, a large number of complaints were made by workers regarding health/safety issues at workplaces; NJDOL was able to work with employers and has not had to issue any employer citations. All employers were on board to fix the workplace issues, once they were made aware of the needed remediation. Chairman Bone thanked Deputy Commissioner Yuen for his comprehensive report.

#### **IV. Employer Perspectives Continued**

Mr. John Sarno, President, Employers Association of New Jersey (EANJ) provided a follow-up to his discussion at the April meeting. His PowerPoint presentation outlined the impacts of COVID on New Jersey's business community and the outlook for the state, now that vaccinations are being rolled out statewide.

Mr. Sarno recognized the vital work of NJ Department of Health and the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been a bit confusing and slow in reaching employers, who had to react quickly to new situations, and were hampered by some uncertainty about the right and safe ways to re-open.

The Governor has issued executive orders (EOs) to help employers deal with these issues. Mr. Sarno provided an EO summary, and discussed highlights of EO #242, issued on May 24, 2021. He noted the challenges for employers and workers with childcare issues, or reluctance to return to work. There are also challenges to having vaccinated and unvaccinated employees back in the workplace together. Most employers are risk-averse and want to avoid unnecessary hassles; some employers are requiring all employees to continue masking and social distancing while at work.

Vaccinations are not required by OSHA but employers can require them as a condition for returning to work. Mr. Sarno recommended that employers try using persuasion and incentives rather than coercion and threats. Employers can offer voluntary vaccines as part of their wellness programs; they can be creative with incentives, but need to be mindful of the IRS limits on cash incentives. Mr. Sarno will host a webinar on related legal issues and training solutions for employers, on June 21; the invitation was shared with SETC members and guests following the meeting. More information is available from Employers Association of New Jersey (EANJ), on their website at: [EANJ.org](http://EANJ.org).

Commission members discussed the challenges confronting employers and employees; mask requirements for both customers and employees is an ongoing concern. COVID vaccinations are also a frequent concern, especially when considered relative to other masking and vaccination requirements. Vaccination passports and other vaccination "credentials" are in the news right now, but vary widely around the country and globally. Chairman Bone thanked Mr. Sarno for his in-depth presentation and asked members to share any final thoughts and comments in the Chat, which can be shared with Mr. Sarno following the meeting.

## **V. Public Health & The Workplace**

Meg Fisher, M.D., from the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) Office of the Commissioner, provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting key information about COVID vaccinations in New Jersey and the return to the workplace. Background information about COVID-19, its transmission and preventative measures to reduce its spread were included. Dr. Fisher emphasized that vaccination is the key to stopping COVID-19, and presented detailed information about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Vaccine development and the recent pause of the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) vaccine were also discussed. Members and guests asked about the vaccine development process and Dr. Fisher highlighted the overlapping phases of development and testing, emphasizing that nothing was skipped. More information about COVID-19 vaccinations in New Jersey is available online at [covid19.nj.gov/vaccine](https://covid19.nj.gov/vaccine). Appointments and other assistance can be obtained by calling the NJ COVID Vaccine Call Center at 855-568-0545. The vaccine call center is currently receiving between 10,000 – 20,000 calls per day, so interest remains high.

Dr. Fisher discussed the NJDOH efforts to partner with employers on initiatives to vaccinate their employees. NJDOH is pairing vaccine providers with employers to create no-cost, on-site vaccination clinics to help employees and their families get the vaccine. Dr. Fisher shared ways in which employers can positively support their employees during this time, including building conviction (using educational information), amplifying convenience (including easy access to vaccinations) and providing costlessness (including cash incentives, recognition and wellness program reward points). Dr. Fisher also highlighted partner information from NJDOL, regarding employee sick time as it relates to the COVID illness and vaccinations; details are available on the NJDOL website, [mysickdays.nj.gov](https://mysickdays.nj.gov). A new NJ Employer COVID-19 Vaccine promotion toolkit, and other helpful info for employers, is now available on the NJ Business Hub at [business.nj.gov](https://business.nj.gov).

Members discussed whether vaccine boosters might be needed in future. Dr. Fisher indicated that the major pharmaceutical companies are working on both booster shots and new variant shots, in case they are needed. In response to questions, Dr. Fisher indicated that those who tested positive for COVID in the past should definitely still get vaccinated. The three different vaccines all have very high efficacy; there were some variations across geographic locations, and testing was done at different times, so head-to-head comparisons were not strictly possible. Potential side effects for pregnant women are being tracked, especially regarding blood-clot issues; a larger study is needed.

NJDOH has a mobile vaccination unit that can handle large vaccination clinics, and local departments of health have smaller units available for local events. Anyone interested in accessing these mobile units should send an email to Dr. Fisher at [Margaret.Fisher@doh.nj.gov](mailto:Margaret.Fisher@doh.nj.gov). Chairman Bone thanked Dr. Fisher for sharing this critical information with the Commission, and recognized the outstanding work being done by her team and the NJ Department of Health to combat COVID-19.

## **VI. Public Comment and Adjournment**

No public comments were offered. The meeting was adjourned at 11:54am.

### **Next SETC Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2021 (online meeting) ~ 10am – 12pm**

## ATTENDEES: June 2, 2021

### PRESENT MEMBERS and ALTERNATES

Bone, Dennis	Glover, Erskine (for Allen-McMillan)
Bridges, Brian	Milone, Catherine
Brown, Melissa (for Adelman)	Nadler, Sally
Butler, Kate (for Oliver)	Safrin, Michele (for Blake)
Colton, Tara (for Sullivan)	Sen, Tapas
Duda, Teri	Wade, Carolyn Carter
Ferrera, Anthony	Wise, Robert
Franklin, John	Yuen, Paul (for Asaro-Angelo)

### ABSENT MEMBERS

Brown, Kevin	Reisser, Clifford
Carey, Michael	Rice, Ronald
Donnadio, John	Wimberly, Benjie
Gacos, Nicholas	Wilson, McKenzie A.
Hornik, Stephen	Wowkanech, Charles

### OTHER ATTENDEES

Allen, Yolanda	Cuitino, Albert	Jarvis, Shana	Singer-Quast, S.	Vail, Les
Alford, Autumn	Custard, Donna	Jose, Helen	Ramsaran, Ravi	Vaidyanathan, S.
Alpart, Davidene	Davidene, Alpart	Jubanyik, Danielle	Rodgers, Beth	Weir, Barbara
Apple, Emily	Davila-Gatling, S.	Levitt, Jill	Ramsay, David	Weil, Robert
Anochi, Eva	Davis, Patti DeBaere,	Lopez, Benjamin	Sabater, Julio	West, Kelly
Arango, Oswaldo	Greg	Ludizaca, Raul	Sabir, Zahira	Williams, Albert
Armstrong, Jane	Diaz, Julie	Kennedy, John	Safrin, Michele	Williams, Allen
Audet, Emily	DiLeonardo, Christy	Keuper, M.	Sandelier, Nikki	Williams, Leslie
Bacola, Tom	Dunigan, Janet	King, Kia	Satchell, Bridgette	Wright, Tom
Baden, Almonor	Donovan, Brittney	Kuhn, Fran	Scalia, Donna	Wolf, Lynda
Bailey, Hugh	Drakeford, Shamira	Kurdziel, Kevin	Schaeffer, Janine	
Banks, Larry	Enright, Patricia	Kvarantan, Alexandra	Schimanski, T.	<b>SETC STAFF:</b>
Bicica, John	Fazzino, Mike	Levandowski, Andrea	Schlosser, Craig	G. Altman
Blanco, Francis	Fisher, Meg	Liu, Helen	Schuster, Manuela	S. Hutchison
Bobo, Linda	Fitzgerald, Debbie	Martin, Michelle	Seavers, Diane	M. O'Brien Murphy
Bonanno, Lisa	Gatling, Kerri	McLean, Michael	Sharp, Jon	K. Robinson
Breedon, Larry	Gehrke, David	Milano-Sumalingog, S.	Sheridan, Timothy	C. Santarsiero
Bogert, Duwan	Gerson, Amanda	Molinelli, Tammy	Shump, Patricia	
Bussey, Karen	Giordano, Timothy	Moran, Patricia	Soberanis, Roberto	
Cacace, Mark	Gonzalez, Diana	Morrison, Angelique	Soto, Luisa	
Carvajal, Allyson	Gutierrez, Gillian	Murphy, Lauren	Sternbach, Larry	
Caramelo, JoAnne	Grzella, Paul	Meyer, Cheryl	Sumalinoy, Sam	
Carmona-Bell, L.	Harrington, Laurie	Myers, Curtis	Swartz, Jeffrey	
Carroll, Karen	Hartman, Sharon	Oakman, Jeffrey	Taguwa, Denise	
Cassese, Jason	Hiller, Nanci	Ochse, Maureen	Tabassum, Zainab	
Celestin, Sancia	Higgs, Justin	Odeneye, Jobi	Taylor, Yolanda	
Connolly, Rob	Hollenbeck, David	O'Connor, Thomas	Thompson, Cheri	
Crawford, Jim	Howard, Donald	Pierre, Eric		