



# New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Philip D. Murphy, *Governor*

## State Employment and Training Commission

### Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2021 ~ 10am – 12pm  
Online (GoTo Meeting Platform)

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

Chairman Dennis Bone called the meeting to order at 10:06am 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 roundtable introductions, members and guests were asked to place their names in the Chat feature for attendance purposes. The agenda was reviewed; time is made available for public comment, if needed.

#### **II. NJDOL UPDATES:**

Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL), reported on the technology improvements that the Department has made over the past year, to assist unemployment insurance (UI) claimants. NJDOL has also ramped up its UI Staffing without any federal assistance to this point. To put the UI demand in perspective, Commissioner Asaro-Angelo reported that in one week (earlier in the pandemic) NJDOL handled four times the number of UI claims that were filed in all of the Hurricane Sandy timeframe. New Jersey is also the only state to re-write its software code to enable UI claims to be automatically renewed at the 1-year benefit mark; this avoids any break in payments for UI claimants who have reached this milestone date. The Commissioner noted that there is a need for UI system technology advancements in all states; federal support will be needed, as the project is too large for states to handle on their own. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo also discussed the American Rescue Plan legislation that was recently signed by President Biden. New Jersey will be delivering these benefits seamlessly to residents. The Commissioner recognized today's speakers, Mr. John Kennedy and Mr. John Sarno, and thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication. Chairman Bone thanked the Commissioner for his detailed report and his transparency in providing this information.

#### **III. Chairman's Report**

Chairman Bone shared highlights from the recent NGA Spring Symposium; this virtual event was held in March over three days. Much of the focus was on Apprenticeship Initiatives and Literacy programs; both are of critical importance in our state. The conference also covered supportive services, such as child care and transportation. There are indications that a number of federal agencies are interested in working together to address these societal needs more holistically. Chairman Bone indicated that an

update on the appointment of new members to join the Commission will be shared in June. The SETC staff is working directly with the NJDOL Commissioner's office and the Governor's Office to ensure compliance with new membership recruitments.

The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) was discussed next with the commission. The Office of Research and Information (ORI) is modernizing the current online framework, which is 20 years old. It will be replaced by an improved platform that provides enhanced training provider information to help training applicants make better informed choices.

SETC Acting Executive Director Gary Altman discussed a number of national legislative updates: WIOA reauthorization is being worked on by Congress; the new Infrastructure and Jobs bill was recently signed into law and includes a number of workforce provisions, such as health care workforce and apprenticeship program investments; the Relaunching America's Workforce bill is working its way through Congress as well; it currently proposes investing about \$15 billion in workforce programs over multiple years. Finally, the Senate HELP Committee Seeks input from stakeholders on workforce policies; SETC members and stakeholders are encouraged to send their recommendations to [HELPWorkforceComments@help.senate.gov](mailto:HELPWorkforceComments@help.senate.gov).

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

The draft minutes of the SETC Commission meeting from February 3, 2021 were provided to the members prior to today's meeting. Teri Duda made a motion to approve the minutes; Tapas Sen seconded the minutes. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

#### **IV. SETC Apprenticeship Committee Report**

Mr. John Kennedy and members of the NJMEP team provided a detailed presentation on the Apprenticeship Committee work to date, its recommendations for next steps, and background information on the committee's goals and membership.

The Apprenticeship Committee began its work by focusing on three industries: Manufacturing; Medical and Health Care; and IT services. The mission statement of the Apprenticeship Committee was shared with the Commission. The core structural components of an apprenticeship program were discussed by Ms. Patti Moran; she emphasized the importance of employer engagement. Pre-apprenticeship programs are also important, as they provide candidates with valuable exposure to specific career activities and demands and act as a bridge to employment. An NJMEP apprenticeship video was shared during the presentation, to spotlight these values. Mr. Torsten Schimanski discussed the Train the Mentor component, which trains subject matter experts at the job site to be core partners in the program, and provide motivation and support to apprentices on the job.

A program flow model was created as part of the committee's work; it shows the key steps in development of a strong apprenticeship program. A model that outlines the features of career pathways was also developed by the group. Lessons learned include: the value of intermediaries; pre-apprenticeship programs are important feeders to apprenticeship opportunities; foundational learning is instrumental in starting candidates on the right path; and industry-recognized credentials are critical to making programs valuable to employers. Mr. Kennedy noted that NJDOL has published an

industry-valued credential list; there are many credentials being offered by many training providers, and such lists are helpful in determining which credentials are most valuable in the workplace. Next steps were discussed, including structural considerations for the creation and expansion of apprenticeship programs, partner engagement, and remediation programs for learners.

The Apprenticeship Committee report will be shared with members following the meeting. Members discussed the apprenticeship opportunities available in New Jersey, including linkages with high school counselors and the inclusion of women in these programs. In closing, Mr. Kennedy recommended that the committee continue this important work to support apprenticeship programs in New Jersey. Attendees shared additional questions in the Chat feature. Subjects included listings of apprenticeships and experienced mentors; the role of high schools in introducing apprenticeship programs to students; available lists of apprenticeship opportunities in New Jersey; and the inclusion of vocational rehabilitation consumers in future apprenticeship opportunities. These questions were shared with the NJDOL Office of Apprenticeship following the meeting for further exploration.

## **V. Employer Perspectives**

Mr. John Sarno, President, Employers Association of New Jersey (EANJ) provided a PowerPoint presentation, outlining the impacts of COVID-19 on the business community in New Jersey and the outlook for employers and workers in the future. There is a pent-up demand for people to leave their jobs; many employees have stayed in their current employment due to the pandemic, but as workplace culture has degraded, they are looking for a better work/life balance. Mr. Sarno noted that work/life balance is key to productivity and has a real impact on the employer's bottom line. Mental health issues and related costs have increased due to COVID-19. Surveys suggest that 57 percent of workers have experienced burnout at the workplace. In addition, one-quarter of American workers feel that COVID-19 has threatened their job security and opportunities. Potential long-term effects of this crisis include: anxiety, anger and resentment; uncertainty in the future; isolation, depression and hopelessness; health problems; and significant life style changes, with increased thoughts of suicide. These topics are difficult to address and it is not easy to find avenues for discussion at the workplace. Employers need to recognize the big impact that COVID-19 is having on the well-being of their employees, the related impact on their ability to work, and the likelihood of rising insurance costs. In response to these issues, it is reported that 49 percent of employers are offering resiliency programs and 50 percent are offering stress management programs to their workers.

The use of telemedicine and telehealth has greatly increased during the pandemic, and this is likely to continue in the future. Mr. Sarno included discussion of workplace safety protocols, the vaccine rollout, and recommendations regarding bringing people back to work. Mr. Sarno noted the need for public-private resources that will raise awareness of these issues. It is important to treat workplace stress and burnout as a bottom-line issue to be solved, rather than avoided, and to foster a work culture that provides dialogue and necessary procedures. He recommended putting in place programs that will advance employees' knowledge of their health care plans so they can use these as tools for better health and productivity. Final recommendations included providing organizational training for stronger supervision and referrals to health services to support employees, and including training for human resources staff as part of the solution.

More detailed information is available online at [EANJ.org](http://EANJ.org). Mr. Sarno noted that he will host an online webinar on the current OSHA guidance on April 16; this invitation was shared with the Commission members and guests following the meeting. Chairman Bone thanked Mr. Sarno for his in-depth presentation and asked members to share their thoughts and comments in the Chat feature. These included discussion around: engagement efforts with political leaders to get more people vaccinated; the potential need for webinars to help local workforce areas understand employer needs and regulations related to the pandemic; and whether the COVID-19 vaccination efforts are engendering any different response from employers than other vaccinations which may be checked prior to employment. Mr. Sarno will be asked to present at a future meeting to follow up on these topics and include these subjects in his remarks.

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

No public comments were offered. The next Commission meeting will be held on June 2, 2021. The meeting was adjourned at 11:59am.

#### **Next SETC Meeting**

**Wednesday, June, 2 2021 – online meeting**

**10am – 12pm**

*Use GoTo Meeting Webinar Platform to join on 6/2:*

**<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/394439821>**

**ATTENDEES: April 7, 2021**  
**PRESENT MEMBERS and ALTERNATES**

Asaro-Angelo, Robert	Glover, Erskine (for Allen-McMillan)
Bone, Dennis	Milone, Catherine
Bridges, Brian	Nadler, Sally
Brown, Melissa (for Johnson)	Sen, Tapas
Colton, Tara (for Sullivan)	Wade, Carolyn Carter
Duda, Teri	Wilson, McKenzie A.
Ferrera, Anthony	Wise, Robert
Franklin, John	

**ABSENT MEMBERS**

Brown, Kevin	Oliver, Sheila
Blake, Allison	Reisser, Clifford
Carey, Michael	Rice, Ronald
Donnadio, John	Wimberly, Benjie
Gacos, Nicholas	Wowkanech, Charles
Hornik, Stephen	

**OTHER ATTENDEES**

Allen, Yolanda	DeBaere, Greg	King, Kia	Scalia, Donna
Alpart, Davidene	Diaz, Julie	Kuhn, Fran	Schaeffer, Janine
Apple, Emily	DiLeonardo, Christy	Kurdziel, Kevin	Schimanski, Torsten
Anochi, Eva	Dunigan, Janet	Kvarantan, Alexandra	Schlosser, Craig
Armstrong, Jane	Donovan, Brittney	Levandowski, Andrea	Seavers, Diane
Bacola, Tom	Drakeford, Shamira	Liu, Helen	Sharp, Jon
Baden, Almonor	Enright, Patricia	Martin, Michelle	Sheridan, Timothy
Bailey, Hugh	Fazzino, Mike	McLean, Michael	Soberanis, Roberto
Banks, Larry	Ferrera, Anthony	Milano-Sumalingog, S.	Soto, Luisa
Bicica, John	Fitzgerald, Debbie	Molinelli, Tammy	Sternbach, Larry
Blanco, Francis	Gatling, Kerri	Moran, Patricia	Sumalinoy, Sam
Bobo, Linda	Gehrke, David	Morrison, Angeliq	Swartz, Jeffrey
Bonanno, Lisa	Gerson, Amanda	Murphy, Lauren	Taguwa, Denise
Breedon, Larry	Giordano, Timothy	Meyer, Cheryl	Tabassum, Zainab
Bogert, Duwan	Gonzalez, Diana	Myers, Curt	Taylor, Yolanda
Cacace, Mark	Grzella, Paul	Oakman, Jeffrey	Thompson, Cheri
Carvajal, Allyson	Harrington, Laurie	Ochse, Maureen	Vail, Les
Caramelo, JoAnne	Hartman, Sharon	Odeneye, Jobi	Vaidyanathan, S.
Carroll, Karen	Hiller, Nanci	Pierre, Eric	Weir, Barbara
Cassese, Jason	Higgs, Justin	Quast, Sarah Singer	Weil, Robert
Connolly, Rob	Hollenbeck, David	Ramsaran, Ravi	West, Kelly
Crawford, Jim	Howard, Donald	Rodgers, Beth	Williams, Albert
Cuitino, Albert	Jose, Helen	Ramsay, David	Williams, Allen
Custard, Donna	Jubanyik, Danielle	Sabater, Julio	Williams, Leslie
Davidene, Alpart	Levitt, Jill	Sabir, Zahirag	Wright, Tom
Davila-Gatling, S.	Kennedy, John	Sandelier, Nikki	Wolf, Lynda
Davis, Patti	Keuper, M.	Satchell, Bridgette	Yuen, Paul

**SETC STAFF:** Gary Altman, Sheryl Hutchison, Maureen O'Brien Murphy, Kyree Robinson, Courtney Santarsiero