MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Notes -

Introductions

- Participants: Mary Sarris, Ron Iacobucci, Joe Peters, Robert Bower, Rebecca Bialecki, Teri Anderson, Raija Vaisanen, Kathlween Weislein, Lisa Vermette, Karen Pelletier, Tonja Mettlach, Raija Vaisanen, and Chris Andresen (guest)

Committee Check-In:

- We welcomed a new member, Lisa Vermette, Director of Workforce Development and Adult Learning at Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc.

State and Federal Policy Updates

- Tonja provided an end of sesion update on what bills passed, including the economic development legislation. For a more in depth review see MWA's blog. In addition, Tonja shared that there is new leadership in the House and asked Ron to give an update on the new speaker, Ron Mariano.
- Raija provided an update on MWA's work federally with the National Skills Coalition and the Workforce Solutions Group. In December, Raija joined NSC and WSG for meetings with Lynch's office and McGovern.
- Bob shared about the new administration and how in this virtual world it would be pretty easy for us to reach out and suggest more forums on sharing best practices, bringing together people from all over the country. Suggested we also reach out to Chris Andresen about how we can get DOL to start doing more of these cross-state sharing.
- Mary shared some thoughts about how the CTI initiative is going on the ground. They are in the middle of recruiting and finding it hard to recruit because people can't envision themselves going out to training. A big issue is they can't see themselves leaving their homes and their children. When schools reopen this might make it easier.
    - Committee talked about setting up a call with Senator Lewis to discuss the childcare issues. Tonja will reach out to his office.
    - Teri shared that they are seeing similar issues in her region. Slots are reduced and affordability is still an issue. Overall the number of providers is really challenging.

FY22 Budget

- The committee discussed the FY22 budget season which will be commencing shortly. Last session pushed for $10M, was able to get $5M, which in this economy was great. We attribute our success to Senator Comerford and finding a real workforce champion.
- Tonja asked the committee for thoughts around the career center line item. Should we push for $10M again even if that number is not possible? Should we use another number?
- Tonja will share a chart with the line item proposal from the Workforce Solutions Group. If any committee member has thoughts on the career center line item, **please send them to Tonja by January 31st at the latest.**

- MWA will also provide collateral in February to assist local areas in their advocacy efforts around the budget.

D.C. Federal Update - *Guest Speaker Chris Andresen (joining at 2:30)*

- Chris joined the group to talk about what he is seeing in D.C. in terms of workforce.
- New stimulus package but out by Biden -
    - Process wise need to keep in mind the narrow margins in the House and Senate (tied in Senate). Chris has seen a distinction between rescue and recovery. Workforce is in the recovery bucket and Biden's plan is in the rescue bucket so not surprising there is no workforce money.
    - The hope is that the Senate could pass something that is bipartisan but don't know that they can.
- Biggest advice from Chris: talk to your senators/house members (1) describe the economy on the ground; (2) what you have been doing throughout the pandemic; (3) what has been working; (4) and why you need funding now. Connect our issues to covid and your argument and advocacy will be in a much better position.
- Ron asked a question on system changes. Are people talking about big changes to the system? Chris' position is that is the discussion for another day.
- Kathleen- what can we be doing that is outside the box? What haven't we tapped yet. We need to think differently.
- Teri shared about what is really needed is a functional and responsive UI system. Also sees that people are afraid to go back to work and businesses might have to start doing more in order to reassure employees that workplaces are safe.

Public Policy Framework/Campaign

- **Workforce campaign**. MWA in initial conversations with colleagues about raising the profile of workforce development in our state and producing a document aimed at using data and framing the problem COVID has produced and presenting policy solutions for an equitable recovery. We are in talks to get this report funded and hire an outside entity to help produce it (colleagues involved include JVS and WSG). We would also schedule virtual stakeholder engagement sessions to get feedback and input, which MWA would likely lead.
- <u>Feedback requested</u>:
    - Does the committee support this type of effort? What would you want MWA to focus on or stress about your work during the pandemic.
- **MWA Framework** - Tonja will follow up with some initial ideas around a workforce agenda framework for MWA. Areas of focus could include: (1) an equitable recovery from COVID; (2) sufficient funding for the public workforce system; (3) childcare and other workforce supportive services; (4) quality jobs initiative (just using this name for now); and (5) more flexible regulations and longer funding streams.
    - Feedback requested:
        - We will spend the next committee meeting on this topic. Share any ideas, frameworks, etc. you have before the next meeting.

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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Notes -

Participants:

- Participants: Ron Iacobucci, Joe Peters, Robert Bower, Rebecca Bialecki, Raija Vaisanen, Lisa Vermette, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Teri Anderson, Tonja Mettlach,

Committee Check-In/UI Update:

- Ron provided an update on UI and a conversation he had with three state senators (Timilty, Jehlen, and Keenan). Ron noted that Senators/Reps are just as frustrated with the UI system as MassHire is.
- This topic is also very important as if career centers are going to return to in person services we must ensure that things at DUA are under control before then.
- Ron asked the committee for additional information and ideas about how UI could be approved. Committee members were asked to share any additional information or ideas they might have to Ron directly.
- Bobby shared the issues he is seeing with union members and the massive fraud issue.
- Mary shared what she is seeing in the North Shore. Her fear is people lining up with DUA issues at the career center and them not being able to resolve issues (this is what happened during the last recession).

State and Federal Policy Updates

- AVTE legislation (see two bills attached to follow up email).
    - Action Item: Please review using MWA's issue selection sheet and be prepared to talk about potential endorsement of these bills at our next meeting.
- Diverse teachers workforce coalition (see bill attached to follow up email).
    - Teri shared information and proposed legislation from the Diverse Teachers Workforce Coalition her and Rebecca are a part of. The legislation relates to diversification of the teacher workforce and is sponsored by Latinos for Education. While this would be a lift for many school districts, it is on an important topic.
    - Action Item: Please review using MWA's issue selection sheet and be prepared to talk about potential endorsement of legislation at our next meeting.
- Federal: Tonja noted to committee members that MWA shared a summary of the American Rescue Plan that was recently passed in D.C. and hoped members found it helpful. The hope is that now Congress will begin to think about a Recovery plan and that is where workforce funding will be included. MWA will continue to provide updates.

FY22 Budget

- Tonja talked about the FY22 budget and the recent testimony Secretary Acosta shared with the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. One of the questions a legislator asked and that MWA and its members should be prepared to answer is "why do we need more funding when we are serving less customers''?

- This also led to a conversation around the career center line item and why it is under funded by the Governor each budget. When the Governor underfunds the line items, it leads to more work with the legislature as we are beginning at a lower number than where we left off the last budget cycle.
    - Committee members talked about doing the same amount of work but with much less staff.
    - Some regions have been particularly hard hit, for example, the North Shore has seen a drop in its federal funding by almost 50%.
    - Another important point is that career centers aren't just serving WIOA customers but many other grants they receive don't support hiring of additional full time staff.
    - Kevin talked about employers served and how the numbers and our narrative don't accurately reflect that.
    - This led to a discussion about CTI and some of the problems with the funding levels included in the grant.
    - Tonja to review a prior career center survey about one stop line item and how regions use the funding. As a committee we will keep thinking about how we talk about the system's work and the need for at least $10M into the career centers.
- Tonja also shared about a virtual workforce briefing being held on March 22nd to release a white paper on rapid reemployment in hopes committee members could make it.
- Finally, please see here for a recent OpEd Raija wrote for the Boston Business Journal. Great job, Raija!

Public Policy Framework/Campaign

- The committee was over time and did not get to the public policy draft framework. Tonja and Raija will make some changes and send an updated draft to the committee.

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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Notes -

Participants:

- Participants: Ron Iacobucci, Ron Marlow, Joe Peters, Rebecca Bialecki, Raija Vaisanen, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Kathleen Weislein, Tonja Mettlach

FY22 Budget Updates

- Tonja updated the committee on the House budget which was on day 2 of deliberations. So far the Labor and Economic Development amendments have not been taken up so she encouraged all to keep up outreach. It was a great first sign though that the House increased the career center line item from the Governor's proposal. Puts us in a better position going into the Senate budget.

Public Policy Framework

- Tonja gave an update to the committee on the big policy areas that MWA was considering focusing on (see attached). We really want committee ideas and engagement about what we should focus on and what should/could be changed. Currently seems like too many areas of focus and potentially things could be combined.
- Mary - talked about the phrase "future of work" and how those three words end up being everything and nothing. The committee talked about maybe using a different phrase to get at what we are talking about.
- Ron M. - discussed combining innovation, workforce training and apprenticeship.
- Ron I. - discussed the UMass Lowell Professors who presented at the 2019 annual meeting and the work they are doing with dislocated workers on the future of work.
- Kevin - shared about how the system has been very innovative over the past year and hoping as things go "back to normal" that the innovation doesn't stop.
- Kathleen - talked about the services people will still need to get who cannot access them digitally and how potentially the second agenda item could stand on its own.
- Next Steps:
    - MWA to make some changes to the agenda and fill in with more detail so that members can better understand what falls under each category. We will send out the proposed draft agenda at least 2 weeks in advance of the next meeting.

Issue Selection Discussion

- AVTE legislation (note the committee just began this conversation and then ran out of time so we will continue at our next meeting).
- Tonja shared MWA's issue selection document and went over how the committee can evaluate this legislation to determine if we should support it. There are also different levels of support once the committee decides if and when to support.
    - Mary shared that she found that it is very focused on high schools and totally misses the adult training that occurs at vocational-technical schools. She also shared the three types of voc-tech schools (local, regional and comprehensive). The legislation uses the term regional schools and it is unclear if it is using it to only talk about regional vocational schools or really wants to talk about any vocational schools and/or Ch.74 programs.

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- Next Steps:
    - At the May meeting we will continue reviewing the AVTE legislation and then review the teacher diversity legislation. MWA will look for clarification in the meantime on Mary's question.
    - In the meantime, committee members should reach out with any questions.

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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Notes -

Participants:

- Participants: Ron Iacobucci, Robert Bower, Raija Vaisanen, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Kathleen Weislein, Tonja Mettlach

FY22 Budget Updates

- Tonja provided an update on the Senate budget and the $7.5 million included for career centers. Tonja also gave an update on the timing of the American Rescue Funding.
- The committee then began discussing what is the ideal timing of funding and what does the system need in terms of additional funding or other assistance?
    - Very hard to hire right now, even for hiring for your own positions in workforce development.
    - One thought was that with more money could increase wages for current staff and bring on more staff. Pay equity makes it so you can't just increase hiring wages, you would need to increase existing staff wages.
    - Even with the increased WIOA funding and state funding many areas still find someselves underfunded compared to 2009/2010. For example, South Shore down almost $1M.
    - Difference now and in 2009, people who were out of work all wanted to go to retraining, huge demand. People were reaching out to the career center, very little outreach needed. Whereas now, so much outreach is needed for employers looking to hire and/or to convince people to go into training.
    - MassHire infrastructure is people, wages are not keeping pace.
    - Need not just increase funding but consistent funding over multiple years so you don't staff up and then have to lay off all new staff when money goes away.

Public Policy Framework

- Tonja reminded the committee that MWA shared an updated draft legislative agenda with the meeting materials. Tonja asked the committee to respond with questions/comments by June 10th. MWA is likely to present the agenda to the board for approval in June.
- Next Steps:
    - Please review the agenda and email Tonja/Raima by **June 10th** with edits/comments.

Issue Selection Discussion

- The committee ran out of time before getting to the two bills for review.
- We quickly discussed two questions Mary Sarris had about the AVTE bill and Tonja/Raija to follow up with AVTE to get additional information.
- At the next committee meeting we will discuss both bills using MWA's issue selection document.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

July 29, 2021

Introductions and check-in

- Participants: Casey Tiefenwerth, Lisa Vermette, Kevin Lynn, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Joe Peters, Robert Bower, Rebecca Bialecki, Ron Iacobucci, Kathleen Weislein, Tonja Mettlach, Raija Vaisanen

FY22 Budget/ARPA Funding Updates and Discussion

- Tonja updated the committee on a recent meeting with Sen. Rodrigues, Chair of Senate Committee on Ways and Means. In the meeting we concentrated on ARPA funds. The Senator talked about how the Legislature plans to hold 6 hearings and be deliberate as they set priorities for federal ARPA funds.
- The hearing on workforce and housing was held on July 27th and Tonja testified and submitted written testimony.
- Committee discussion:
    - Staff and Training: Even with an increase in federal WIOA allocation, still short in some regions than what they had through ARRA in the Great Recession. Training dollars for ITAs don't go far enough. Need FY22 $ faster.
    - Need money as soon as possible to respond.
    - Youth Programs from a Workforce Board point of view - Connecting Activities and YouthWorks don't go far enough to meet the demand.
    - Set up regional meetings soon with local legislators so they know the importance of using money for training. Include more creative options for pay while you go through training, like apprenticeships do.
    - Stipend idea -
        - How do you do that?
    - Kevin discussed how his staff skews older and they are retiring. Kevin is having to replace them and their salaries are not competitive with the market. Which means he is not getting the right people with the right skills for the job.
    - Rebecca talked about childcare concerns for staff and job seekers.
    - Lisa talked about the great need for digital training and less red tape. Everyone needs these key functional skills.
    - Casey discussed the need for flexible funding. They are currently working with community colleges right now to expand training opportunities with them
    - Major challenges - timing of funding/cash flow, variable levels of funding year to year. Some orgs work with only 80% of their budgets year to year, to make sure they carry in 20% in case of funding cuts in a future year or unexpected costs. Others start the year in the red and "claw their way" into the black.
    - Technology for staff to be able to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively

H.2059, *An Act Expanding Worker OwnershipTraining Opportunities*

- Tonja noted that there is some confusion around this legislation and MWA is not going to take a position until we learn more. It appears that Rep. Mark is not the lead sponsor on this bill. We will wait for more information from WSG before proceeding.

Issue Selection Discussion

- Tonja/Raija discussed a new process going forward to get committee member feedback on legislation. Tonja/Raija will begin filling out the issue selection documents, prepare short bill summaries, and will make recommendations on legislation for committee members. This will make the process easier and quicker for evaluating potential legislation for support and will continue to allow for committee input and feedback.

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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

September 14, 2021

In attendance: Rebecca Bialecki, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Bob Bower, Karen Pelletier, Kathleen Weislein, Ron Iacobucci, Raija Vaisanen, Tonja Mettlach

Notes

ARPA Funding Updates and Discussion

- Tonja provided an update on the ARPA funds process. The Legislature continues to hold hearings and we anticipate those hearings to go through September. We will likely see some sort of bill in mid to late fall and it is unclear whether the Legislature will spend all the funds at once or in multiple bills over a longer period.
- Committee was provided with a copy of the PowerPoint from EOLWD which provided an overview of the Baker Administration's proposal for how they would like to see $240 million invested into workforce development. Tonja shared how she had learned through EOLWD that these funds cannot be directly allocated via formula and must have some competitive aspect (RFP like) to the distribution.
- Committee discussion -
    - Tonja started the conversation with two questions: (1) reactions to the administration's proposal; and (2) what are your capacity needs, what else do you need that MWA could be advocating for?
    - Rebecca - discussed some frustrations in terms of needing the money locally and how best to pass along input that will then be incorporated into recommendations. Also, currently issues with the timing of the manufacturing line item. Tonja reminded committee members that we still have a chance to influence how the legislature spends ARPA funds so any specific recommendations would be helpful.
    - Chris - still some uncertainty about the market maker positions but the navigator role in the career center would be helpful. Additional funding would be prioritized for career center staffing in Metro North at this point. Biggest takeaway, local flexibility is really important. Could funding be allocated similar to YouthWorks?
    - Next Steps: The committee would appreciate any feedback on needs for regional funding. What do you want to see with the ARPA funds? What do you support or disagree with in the Administration's proposal?

Guest Speaker: *Chris Andresen, Updates from DC*

- Chris shared insights about the current situation in D.C. The House education and labor bill, which was recently passed, included $80 billion in workforce funding and is 4 year money.

Another Ways and Means bill included about $9 billion for TAA and TAACCCT. Altogether, that makes a pretty good bill out of the House for workforce development.

- Difficulty is in the Senate. More traditional funding level is around $15 billion dollars. There is another $25 billion for a civilian climate corps which is not in the House bill. Reconciliation can be hard with new programs.
- Committee talked a bit about what we can do federally and what we are hearing from our delegation.

Updates on legislation for committee approval/review

- As a reminder, MWA previously sent the committee recommendations for the following bills (approval for both): the AVTE legislation and the teacher diversity legislation. Let us know if you have any questions.
- Next week MWA will send to the committee with recommendations - the protected at work legislation and wage gap/equal pay legislation.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

November 16, 2021

In attendance: Rebecca Bialecki, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Bob Bower, Karen Pelletier, Casey Tiefenwerth, Joe Peters, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Raija Vaisanen, Tonja Mettlach

Notes

Infrastructure and ARPA Funding Updates

- Tonja provided an update on the Infrastructure bill that was recently passed by Congress. This was the more traditional bi-partisan bill which would fund bridges, roads, broadband, etc. See summary attached to the email.
- Tonja then provided an update on the ARPA bills that have passed the House and the Senate and are currently before a conference committee. Click here to read a recent blog post outlining the entire process.
- Questions/discussion:
    - Mary asked about eligibility criteria for the ARPA funds as she heard there was going to be income thresholds for folks to qualify for these training dollars. Tonja responded that she did not know but would look into it.
    - Mary also talked about wages and the hard hit, mainly healthcare, industries that have hard jobs to fill and are now competing with retail who are offering higher wages.
        - Raija followed up with the committee on some information related to premium pay proposals for home care and nursing home workers in the current House and Senate bills. In addition, EOHHS has some ARPA funds it is allocating for this purpose. Mary asked for more information about workers in hospital settings.
    - Rebecca talked about the cliff effect and issues that are barriers to low wage workers obtaining employment, particularly the loss of child care vouchers.

EOLWD Workforce Spending Plan

- Committee members were provided with a PowerPoint outlining the strategies of EOLWD with the $104 million in ARPA and FY21 funds.
- The committee had a conversation around priorities and potential gaps.
    - Chris - The proposal is starting in the right place, funding proven programs. However, there are still some questions about support services and how that will work with the various Comm Corp funded programs, or for programs who don't qualify for those programs. For example, if you had someone who wasn't accessing training under WCTF or CTI, how could you help them access supportive wrap-around services? Some administrative issues and questions.
    - Recruitment -
        - Huge issue across the state.

        - Only hitting the mainstream, those who traditionally interacted with the career center. But where is everyone else and how do we reach them? Important from a DEI perspective but also the only way we will fill training slots.
    - Casey shared that they are seeing the same issues with recruitment for programs. Their main criteria to qualify is to be in treatment in MA. Lately they have started partnering with faith based partners, community drop in centers, community health centers and other community partners. There are trust issues and you get that trust and buy in when you work with a community partner.
    - Another challenge is folks taking advantage of paid training, but not going into the field they are trained for - therefore, not meeting employer needs. For instance, folks taking plumbing training but not going into the field and instead using the skills for their personal use.
- YouthWorks: proposal in the House to add $40 million to YouthWorks. Tonja asked committee members what they would do with that additional funding.
    - Chris - right now only working with 6 of the 20 cities in the region. Always have waitlists. With additional funding could fill more slots and bring on more cities and towns that want to join the network.
    - Need a sub category that doesn't use the term youth. 18-25 year olds don't consider themselves to be youth.
    a. Every area could expand service but for the 21-25 year olds we have to think about how to make summer jobs work for that age group. Could you send them all to an occupational training program with the employment (any entry level certifications)?
    b. Kevin - Dire need of paid training experiences for youth. Working with MassSave on a grant that teaches youth weatherization. Paid component to it and it has made a difference in recruitment. Also have to remember that a lot of these kids are contributing to the family income. Their income is critical to that family paying the rent or putting food on the table.
    c. Can't just think of the 3 summer months, but 9 other months as well.

FY23 Budget

- Career Center line item, $9.5 million in FY21 budget. What do we want to push for this session? Suggestion was $10 million.
- Tonja to continue to reach out to members and discuss this line item at next career center director meeting.