MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
ONE SYSTEM – ONE VOICE

Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, January 31, 2023

In-attendance: Ron Iacobucci, Maura Geary, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Mary Sarris, Robert Bower, Karen Pelletier, Rebecca Bialecki, Ron Marlow, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

MWA/WSG Legislation: HD1421, *An Act relative to workforce data accessibility,* Rep. Josh Cutler

- As a reminder, MWA and the Workforce Solutions Group worked with Rep. Cutler and Senator Jehlen to file a data accessibility bill. You can view the bill here.
- Tonja opened up the discussion about this bill, areas of concern or ideas.
- Back in 2015 - Commissioner Cunningham was very opposed to making the data available and would always go back to privacy concerns. Jenn James could be someone worth talking to.
- Good time to make an alliance with the economist in the LMI department.
- New career services director swears through the "LACES" database for up to date wage data by student, employment record, and status. If that is true, then
    - MWA to do some follow up on this.
- Question of usability is a huge one. No point getting access to data if we can't use it and interpret it. Usability and access has to be at the forefront of this issue. Less clear how things work based on that issue. We should keep talking about how to ensure the data received can be actually used.
- Issue gets convoluted. Maybe the approach is this - where the chairs of the committee are looking for greater accountability. Data gives us an additional tool in terms of accountability. Bill becomes a vehicle to broaden the conversation.
- Want a couple of things from the data: want to know of all the people putting into training, who got a job and what was their wage out of the programs. Also trying to figure out all the pressure on non-WiOA customers and reporting on them.

FY24 Budget - Career Center line item discussion

- Tonja opened up the discussion by providing a background of this line item and warning the committee that we are highly unlikely to see this line item funded at $15M in the FY24 H1 budget. Guessing the figure will be in the $5-7 million range. MWA used to frame the need for this fund, in part, due to decreases in federal funding. That is not true anymore. Tonja asked committee members to think about and discuss the right frame for this line item this budget season.
- Consistency is a huge issue. Huge swings in the line item make it very difficult to plan and spend the money. Also slow spending is very connected to the labor market and the difficulty in hiring. Still trying to figure out the right spending levels for

- Secretary Jones is hiring a new LD, it would be great to educate him about these issues. Invite him to the next public policy committee meeting.
- Funding is so specific grant based, very unpredictable. If you are going to fund a vibrant adult ed training, there should be a more sustainable and predictable pattern that would lend itself to the One Stop funding.
- Administrative issues with contracts, training programs coming out of too many different Secretariats. The One Stop line item should be large enough for individual regions to manage a dependable and reliable funding stream.
- Another question - why does the legislature increase or decrease a line item? Political question - what does it mean to have a strong career center in your district?
- Disconnected message in the Impact Report talking about the statewide virtual job fair.
- Value proposition to the legislature - should be based on our values. Needs to be some cohesiveness.
- Trends in the economy - demographics should be brought to people's attention.
- People who are out of the labor force, they need a lot of help to get back into the labor market. Think about those folks who aren't working or working very low wage jobs. They will be more expensive to train and get to work.
- Consistency - and the disconnect between the state and regional workforce board. If we have one or two voices on the directors on the board we can help them get information they need.
- Issuing one year allocations. No way to run a system.

WIOA Reauthorization:

- Tonja noted some changes for the U.S. House's Education and Labor Committee this session.
- Virginia Fox will now become Chair and Bobby Scott will move to Ranking Member.
- Last time WIOA Reauthorization occurred, there was aRepublican House, a Democratic Senate, and a Democrat as President.
- MWA, though the public policy committee, should be prepared to have our priorities for WIOA Reauthorization and also should be working on a narrative with other stakeholders to explain the data which might not look as great as we think it should.
- Ron asked if there will be talking points when meeting with Congressional staff in D.C. in March for NAWB. Tonja responded that according to NAWB they will be preparing one pagers.