MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

January 25, 2022

In attendance: Rebecca Bialecki, Bob Bower, Maura Geary, Ron Iacobucci, Ron Marlow, Karen Pelletier, Kathleen Weislein, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

ARPA Funding Updates/FY23 Budget

- Tonja provided an update of the ARPA bill that was passed last year. In addition, state budget season starts tomorrow with Governor Baker submitting his proposal.
- Tonja mentioned that there will at some point be an ARPA bill number 2 and we should have some recommendations for how we would like to see workforce funding spent.
- Kevin - can we hold some reserve from ARPA for workforce development specifically?
    - What is the minimum amount needed to run a career center? That could be a way to build the buffer.
- Bob - plenty of money out there for workforce development, but not enough money for staff capacity.
- Maura - concept of the true cost v. the fixed costs of what it takes to run each center. Could that type of analysis be done under the umbrella of capacity building. Could be some type of ROI that could articulate the costs to run the system.
- Mary - no movement, limited movement on navigator role, recruiting on 4-5 new programs and if they had the stipends could do a better job. Things are just moving way too slow.
    - Raija provided an update on the navigator fole and the salary amount that Alice had shared.
    - Issue with setting a salary at the state level
- Kathleen - have to train that person and bring them up to speed. Would rather promote someone in house and bring in someone new.
- Ron M. - when Alice sent out the email with an all-in number, the amount of information relative to that position has not been sufficient or has the process moved enough.

YouthWorks Feedback

- Tonja reminded the committee about a proposal here from a coalition seeking to advise Commonwealth Corporation on how to spend the $25M in ARPA funds for YouthWorks. They are asking MWA for input and if we could support.
    - Feedback: being the “employer of record” is much more complicated than people realize, also can impact you on employment size and the rules/regulations that come with that.
    - Eligibility of students is a big issue too.
    - Ron also shared some thoughts on Breaktime and some potential issues with the proposal.
    - Tonja asked committee members to follow up with any additional thoughts on the letter.

2022 Priorities/Budget/Etc./Planning for a New Administration

- EOLWD conversation on staffing

    - North shore - will be raising wages for local staff soon to bring parity to the state v. local salaries. Hope this will help with retention and new hires.
    - Need more flexibility in terms of hybrid v. remote work. Want to work somewhere with windows and certain workplaces. What other things can you offer to attract people?
    - Kevin - can't be any disconnect between current staff v. new hires. But as a nonprofit, the state wage equity act, cannot be hiring people and providing things.
    - Rebecca - need to do internally what we are telling employers to do - look at salaries, work schedules, things that make good jobs.
    - Ron - two part conversation: (1) the way state gov has shifted into a more flexible model is probably the same flexibility that should exist in those who are conduits; (2) where does an operator land on such a question. Seeking flexibility is important regardless of how individual operators might apply it to their center.
    - Issues with stipends and using them to incentivize existing staff to take on more work. Layering on too much right now.
- ATR - how to expand statewide. We should work with ATR to price out expansion and decide how to potentially advocate for funding for expansion.
- Tonja/Raija to think about how to vision recommendations for a new administration and the best way to engage members in this work. More information to come soon.

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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

In attendance: John Drinkwater, Dani Smejkal, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Maura Geary, Ron Iacobucci, Ron Marlow, Karen Pelletier, Kathleen Weislein, Kevin Lynn, Mary Sarris, Rebecca Starr, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

FY23 Budget

- Tonja opened up a committee discussion about the career center line item. To date over half of the FY22 career center funds remain unpent but MWA is planning to continue its advocacy to increase spending in FY23. Committee discussed what the issues are and how MWA could address them:
    - Era of firehose spend. Problem is now we have a lot of funds but eventually the funds will go away and we will be left in a drought.
    - Challenge here is to get over the June 30th spend date - in the previous recession had a much more generous spend date and the demand was there. So many issues tied to the fact that the supply side is not responding in the way it has in the past.
    - When we are talking about the career center line item - need to define, or redefine what it funds and keep it discrete from broader conversation about programming dollars. They are making an investment in the infrastructure of the system.
    - But that infrastructure and capacity funding needs to be there for longer than a few months.
    - One stop funding funds offers flexibility at the local level to respond to local needs.
    - We have multiple year charters with the career centers but the funding is all one year at a time.
- In the short term, MWA will explore a PAC so that regions don't lose any unspent FY22 funds. In the longer-term we need to take a closer look at how we fund workforce development and the career center line item. Need more consistency.
- Workforce Advocacy briefing on March 31st at 10:00am. Register here.

WCTF feedback discussion

- MWA had been asked by the Chair of Labor and Workforce Development about how to improve WCTF - basically what could the legislature do to make WCTF work better or fund more partners. Committee discussed this question:
    - Reality is that WCTF in 2021/2022 looks very little like it did 10 years ago. Due to the influence of the WSC, there has been a decision made to align all funding with what the state has defined as priorities. So WCTF used to be very flexible at the local level. This priority issue is one that all members might not feel the same about.
    - Need a simpler way to apply for grants.
    - Need a way to address the supply issues - for example stipends.
    - Need the ability to incentivize job seekers and we need to fund childcare.

    - Need flexible dollars - could go towards transportation for job seekers.
    - Is there more we can do to incentivize employers to host/sponsor child care, internships, and apprenticeships? These are just examples but employers are more at the table than they have been previously.

National Skills Coalition

- Virtual meetings with Rep. Lynch, Sen. Warren, and Sen. Markey staffs - on the senate side there was a lot of conversation about taking advantage of ARPA dollars while available. On the house side people are already anticipating a shift in leadership after the midterm elections.
- We signed onto a letter in support of expansion of the Pell Grant to support short term training and education. Click here to read the letter.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

In attendance: Rober Bower, Chris Albrizio-Lee, Maura Geary, Ron Iacobucci, Karen Pelletier, Kathleen Weislein, Rebecca, Białecki, Mary Sarris, Rebecca Starr, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

FY23 Budget Updates

- Tonja updated the committee on where we are in the state budget process (Senate Ways and Means has released its budget proposal with the full Senate to take up the bill next week).
- The career center line item was funded at $10M, making the floor $10M in conference, with the House proposing $15M. One other difference between the House and Senate proposals is the House included language around reporting:
    - Data request: For the one-stop career centers; provided, that not later than March 3, 7464 2023, the department shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on way and means including, but not limited to: (a) the number of businesses participating for placement of individuals; (b) the number of individuals utilizing the program; (c) outreach initiatives the centers are engaged in to reach minority populations and historically economically disadvantaged populations; and (d) the success rate of individuals finding and maintaining employment utilizing the centers.....$15,000,000
- Tonja asked for feedback and questions around this data request (would be difficult for MWA to advocate for the $15M but ask the legislature to drop all reporting requirements)
    - Raija pointed out the difference between state and federal dollars with reporting and how the request by the legislature is actually not clear. From the language included it does not appear that the legislature is asking specifically about the career center line item.
    - Bobby talked about how important this is and maybe MWA could commission/write a statewide report on the impact of the system to help lawmakers understand.
    - Chris discussed how the funding is used in such an integrated way, that it should be o.k. to consider the data collection on customers for federal programs for the state funding.
    - Mary pointed out data point (c) and how important this is. The North Shore is asking itself the same question. Mary also talked about hiring being the biggest challenge and that is why their region has not spent more of the state funding this fiscal year. Finally, Mary discussed the possibility of using one stop funding to offer stipends to incentivize training participants.

    - Rebecca agreed that if we are asking for additional funding we should agree to some sort of accountability.
    - A few regions talked about what types of job seekers they are seeing and what funding has been more challenging to spend.
- Tonja also brought up the economic development bill filed by Governor Baker earlier this month. That bill is before the house and could incorporate ARPA funds. There is a line item for $20M to go to municipalities for workforce training, as they can't access the other state funded training programs.

WIOA Reauthorization

- Tonja provided an overview of the WIOA reauthorization timeline and how unlikely it is that the bill will emerge for a vote in the Senate (see emailed agenda for background information on bill)
- Tonja asked committee members for feedback on what areas MWA should focus on in terms of changes or improvements to the system:
    - A few members shared that the biggest issue continues to be the issues around state staff/local employment. Particularly in this economy where state wages keep going up and we have no control or good comparison on local pay.
    - Chris shared two top issues:
        - Requirement to procure an operator every 4 years. Could there be some wiggle room and/or some ability to ease that burden? It is really disruptive.
        - Requirement that almost all unemployment claimants have to utilize a career center to get their benefits. That results in career centers being high volume places that have to focus on some folks who really do not need or want MassHire services.
        - Raija mentioned a research study (possibly from another country) she had heard about which described UI systems that used data on UI recipients to determine who would need more extensive assistance with re-employment. She will look to see if she can get a copy of the study and if there are examples of this type of thing being done in other states.
    - Maura had a slightly different perspective on the mix of job seekers needed to serve employers and that having access to all different types of unemployed people was a value add for them.
    - Mary shared that the challenge has always been the fact that people are required to go to career centers. How do you change the negative association with being forced to go to the career center?
    - Kathleen - pandemic has pushed people into poverty - has changed who we are working with and what services they need.
    - Tonja asked committee members to keep sharing ideas and feedback.
    - See accompanying email for more updates on WIOA reauthorization.

Comments - Wagner Peyser Rule Change

- See here for the proposed rule itself.

- Tonja shared that MWA's advocacy strategy, like NAWB's and others, will have a short and long term component. Short term we will focus on alternative 1 offered by DOL in the proposed new rule (allow the three demonstration states to keep alternative staffing models). Long-term we will support other regions in additional efforts to change Wagner Peyser staffing regulations.
- Some committee members suggested in the meantime we continue to advocate with the state for a better way to staff the centers in a coordinated and collaborative manner - a more integrated management system. It is an ongoing issue that MDCS is not only the career centers' biggest partner, but they are also the overseer in terms of compliance.
- We also have to keep in mind the impact this rule change would have on staff, particularly from the four regions in MA that would be directly affected by this proposed change.
- Chris shared that there are efforts underway for a coordinated strategy as it relates to this specific notice of public rulemaking. In the long-term he is very much in favor of advocating whatever initiatives need to happen to address the challenges identified today but this rule making process is likely not the right venue to make that larger change. Would appreciate any support other regions can provide in helping keep the status quo through this process.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, July 26, 2022

In attendance: Chris Albrizio-Lee, Maura Geary, Ron Iacobucci, Karen Pelletier, Rebecca Białecki, Mary Sarris, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

FY23 Budget Update

- Tonja provided an update on the FY23 budget. As was announced to members, last week the conference committee unveiled and both chambers unanimously approved a compromise $52.7 billion FY23 budget (H 5050). In conference, the committee was able to mark up line items and take the higher numbers between chambers given the expected $3 billion surplus in FY22. Other important notes:
    - The fiscal year 2023 budget works towards that goal with $250 million in Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) stabilization grants, $60 million for a rate reserve to increase salaries for teachers and others at subsidized providers, $31.5 million in grants to Head Start programs across the state and $175 million for a new High-Quality Education and Care Affordability Fund that will help fund the implementation of recommendations from the review commission.
- This included historic state investments in workforce development, including a record high $15 million for the One Stop line item.
    - Ron: Do we need to worry about the Governor vetoing? Tonja said with a near $3B surplus, it would be surprising if he vetoed very much.
- Discussion:
    - How is FY22 spending going, need to PAC?
        - Franklin-Hampshire has been able to spend down their one-stop $.
    - Discussion on data request for One Stop line item: For the 1-stop career centers; provided, that not later than March 3, 2023, the department shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on ways and means including, but not limited to: (i) the number of businesses participating for placement of individuals; (ii) the number of individuals utilizing the program; (iii) outreach initiatives the centers are engaged in to reach minority populations and historically economically disadvantaged populations; and (iv) the success rate of individuals finding and maintaining employment utilizing the centers
        - Ron: Who is actually responsible for reporting? And can we ask Rep. Cutler to pressure DOR/DUA on getting access to the data?
            - EOLWD and DCS are responsible, but we want to inform that process since the data come from each career center

        - Wage data legislation - Rep. Cutler would be great to file it.
        - Raija shared that MassINC is also looking to support legislation on data accessibility etc.
    - Mary is not always sure that the career center is entering the data in MOSES with fidelity or consistently. We need to be looking into this soon if a report is due in March 2023. There are lots of new staff and many have been down staff - this is a challenge for training new staff and the data entry side. Need quality checking from leadership as we're doing so much more of this in a remote environment.
    - Maura - not all regions understand the importance and connection to funding that data entry and reporting are involved with, and also not all regions have capacity to do the data entry well. This can be an opportunity to speak the same language with the legislature and have some back and forth on defining the terms. Perhaps these 4 items they are looking for are our first priorities to address through the Impact Measurement Task Force that MWA is kicking off. Maura also has 6 new staff at her center and shares that challenge that Mary mentioned. If there is a better measure/metric that we should be focusing on, we could look at that and create peer learning around how the money is used, spent, reported on.
    - Tonja - we should stay in touch with Rep. Cutler as we do this work so that we aren't just waiting until the report is due. Hopefully, that will help us communicate about the reporting and the use of funding, as we work through this process.
    - Maura: It would be great to be able to say why the flexibility of this funding is so important.
- Mary was approached to see if her Board would support the millionaires tax ballot question. Has anyone else?
    - Tonja said Lew Finfer had also reached out to her about MWA's board supporting it. The PP committee would have to make a recommendation to the board.
    - Tonja could use our issue selection document and start a draft that other boards could use as a template. Tonja will share with the committee.
    - Chris was also asked and wondered if there is any leaning in one direction or another. His board doesn't know.
    - Chris asked if there are limitations on how much involvement organizations that receive federal $ can have in supporting legislation like this.
        - Tonja will send a resource to help explain what you are allowed to do. There is a difference between educating legislators etc. vs. directly asking/lobbying for support/vote for a particular bill.

End of session updates/next session/fall meetings

- Legislature has until this Friday to get all its work wrapped up as there will be no more formal sessions after July 31st. MWA will send out a comprehensive recap of what gets passed and how the session ends sometime in August. In the meantime, reach out with any questions.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

In attendance: Chris Albrizio-Lee, Ron Iacobucci, Karen Pelletier, Rebecca Białecki, Kevin Coughlin, Rebecca Starr, John Drinkwater, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

End of Legislative Session and Visioning Committee Updates

- Tonja provided an update on the end of the 2021/2022 formal legislative session. She referred people to also review the blog post MWA emailed out at the end of August recapping the session.
- The one big piece of legislation that is still in play is the economic development bill. There is a good chance that the legislature will come to an agreement on some part of this bill in the coming weeks and will either suspend its rules and come back to pass the bill or will pass it in an informal session.
- Update: Since the meeting, the auditor has certified that the taxpayers are owed $2.941 billion in refunds due to the triggering of Chapter 62F. Since then, the Baker Administration has said that starting in November, taxpayers will receive via checks or direct deposits the $2.951B in excess revenue. The amount each individual receives will vary in proportion to how much personal income tax liability each taxpayer incurred in 2021.
- Discussion -
    - Kevin shared some of the work going on with employers in the Greater Lowell area and the MA AFL-CIO.

Brainstorm Priorities Next Session

- Tonja shared that now is the time for MWA and the policy committee to start thinking of priorities for next session. One priority we know relates to accessing wage data and MWA's commitment to file a bill and/or work with others to file legislation.
- Another issue we are working on is the new reporting requirement included with the one stop career center line item in this year's budget. As a reminder the reporting requirement states: For the 1-stop career centers; provided, that not later than March 3, 2023, the department shall submit a report to the house and senate committees on ways and means including, but not limited to: (i) the number of businesses participating for placement of individuals; (ii) the number of individuals utilizing the program; (iii) outreach initiatives the centers are engaged in to reach minority populations and historically economically disadvantaged populations; and (iv) the success rate of individuals finding and maintaining employment utilizing the centers..... $15,000,000

- Tonja let the committee know that MWA plans to take a lead role in ensuring this reporting requirement is met and using it as an opportunity to get access to wage data. The newly formed MWA Impact Measurement Task Force will take this on**.** We have talked with the state in order to not duplicate efforts (Cheryl, Jenn and Diane) given that the secretariat is responsible for the reporting. The plan is to have the impact measurement task force lead the conversation but to engage other committees such as the Workforce Allocations Task Force, the Workforce Board and Career Center Council, and others.
- Reach out to Tonja or Raija anytime with ideas for issues/bills next session.

Guest: ***Chris Andresen, D.C. Update***

- Chris Andresen, the federal lobbyist who works with USWA, called into the policy committee meeting to provide some updates from D.C.
- Chris had just been to the MI statewide conference, where state leaders and policymakers were very vocal about their opposition to the Wagner-Peyser rule change, eliminating the waiver from those states that had one to allow re-employment services to be delivered by non-merit staff. He said the letters that MI sent to Sec. Walsh and DOL were very well done and he will try to share them so that we can share with Congressman Lynch and his staff.
- Chris discussed the work USWA has been doing with the White House around the infrastructure bill, the talent pipeline challenge and the recently passed CHIPs bill.
- He pointed out that a lot of the federal money about to come to MA for workforce development won't be coming through DOL. Chris asked the group about our partnerships with DOT, NSF, and others and recommended we work with Sen. Markey on the Commerce Committee on these issues. Since this funding will be spread over 5 to 10 years, this will allow the system to be more strategic
- As of right now nothing really happening with TAA and WIOA Reauthorization and nothing likely to happen before midterms.
- MWA will follow-up with other partners to determine who DOT contacts are and to make some more connections/build relationships.

MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
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Massachusetts Workforce Association
Public Policy Committee Meeting Notes

Tuesday, November 15, 2022

In-attendance: Rebecca Starr, Ron Iacobucci, Maura Geary, Kevin Coughlin, Mary Sarris, Robert Bower, Ron Marlow, Raija Vaisanen, and Tonja Mettlach

Notes

Guest: ***Ramona Rivera-Reno, MassHire Holyoke Career Center***

- Updates and discussion around the Recovery Ready Workplace (RRW) legislative efforts
- See attached PowerPoint for additional information.
- Question and Answer:
    - What is the advocacy ask this session? Meeting with local legislators in western MA and are creating a petition to have legislators sign to support an effort to expand Recovery Ready Workplaces across the state. Also looking to get an earmark in next session's budget.
    - Rebecca - if legislators start to understand the importance of RRW, then have to figure out how to get businesses to sign on and be part of the effort. Where would you get the money from and who will spearhead it? Initial thoughts that the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development could spearhead this effort.
    - Bob Bower - are you working with the unions and the building trades association? There is an Addiction Recovery Council they have been organizing. Marty Walsh at the federal level is also a big proponent of recovery and could support this. See: https://massbuildingtrades.org/state-house-news-service-addictiono-recovery-council/. And: https://massbuildingtrades.org/wbsm-ending-addiction-stigma-in-building-trades/
    - Mary - what does this look like on the ground? Would you be looking for funding to support these positions in career centers throughout the state?
    - Maura - how are you working with local nonprofits or others doing similar work? Maura gave some examples of a local coalition that already exists with Hampshire Hope. Maura has seen strong interest in Franklin/Hampshire whenever her MassHire business service reps host meetings with employers on this issue.

MDCS Issuance: FutureSkills MOSES Data Entry for Market Makers

- Draft policy - comments due 11.15.22
- Any feedback? Should MWA make comments?
- Mary - talked to Ashley and Beth about the first data policy issuance. North Shore Career Center is now entering everyone into MOSES as for some reason when CTI started,

MassHire North Shore agreed they would do the data entry for Essex Tech (in other regions, the training provider enters the data).
    - Maura - just getting into CTI and the career center will enter just into MOSES.
- Latest issuance - continuing to be an issue with the Market Marker position and who employs them. However, at this time, there doesn't seem to be anything for MWA to comment on. These issues can be included in the ongoing discussion about Comm Corp and places for improvement.

Visioning Document - Next Steps/Discussion for other audiences

- Final draft should be designed and completed next week. After that we will work with this Committee and the Ad Hoc Visioning Committee to edit a version to be shared with a broader audience, including legislators, as we start the session.

Brainstorm Priorities Next Session

- Ron Iacobucci shared conversations he's had with his Mayor, Mayor and Lieutenant Gov. Elect Driscoll and others about developing a meeting of Board Directors and Chief Elected Officials to advise the incoming administration. Bob Bower shared that Tony Mazzucco, the City Manager for Norwood, also wanted to do something like this.
- Mary shared she has an upcoming meeting with Mayor Driscoll in early December. She will offer her help to the incoming administration, but has been careful not to overstep or bother her given how many asks the Mayor must be getting now. Mary shared that she supported the workforce board and its leadership and staff while she's been in that office.