



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Senate Workforce Development Task Force Releases Report to Improve Connections to Career Training, Education, and Brighter Opportunities

JACK M. MARTINS May 24, 2016

| ISSUE: **TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

| COMMITTEE: **TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The New York State Senate Task Force on Workforce Development today released a report summarizing the findings and recommendations from forums held across the state to improve the connections between job seekers and employers looking to hire new workers. Task Force Co-Chairs Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola) and Senator George Amedore (R-C-I, Rotterdam) announced the report that provides a series of legislative, budgetary, and policy recommendations that open the door to new job opportunities, financial security, and career success for more New Yorkers.

The Task Force identified ways to help improve employee readiness; better meet the workforce needs of private sector employers; connect job seekers with potential employers; retrain those who have lost jobs; and help make New York State's overall economy more robust, dynamic and resilient.

Senator Martins said, "Right now in New York State, there are thousands of jobs left unfilled because businesses can't find properly trained workers. The Task Force's number one goal was bridging this employment gap to help businesses grow and train New Yorkers

seeking employment to fill these in-demand jobs. These recommendations, developed with extensive stakeholder input from across New York and through the hard work of the Task Force members, accomplish that goal. Now the state must take the next step and implement these reforms so that we can fill open jobs, put people to work, and help businesses grow and develop.”

Senator Amedore said, “Investing in a first-rate, skilled workforce is critical to the future health and vitality New York State’s economy. I want to thank our partners in business, and in education, who participated in the forums to help us develop strong solutions to develop a stronger work force here in New York. The recommendations we are putting forward today will lay a solid foundation to build on the programs we’ve seen success with, and provide us with new tools to help us bridge the gap between businesses who are looking for employees, and potential workers who need to be trained with the necessary skills to compete in today’s changing economy.”

The Senate Task Force on Workforce Development was established in March 2015 and charged with reviewing the state’s existing programs designed to train both job seekers and existing employees for current and prospective employment opportunities. Five forums - in New York City, Albany, Rochester, Newburgh, and Long Island - were held to receive input from leaders in business, labor, public education, higher education, local governments, and workforce training and development. The valuable information received from these stakeholders was then used to develop eight primary recommendations that will help make the state’s workforce development programs significantly more effective.

Mark Eagan, CEO of the Capital Region Chamber, said, “The Capital Region Chamber commends Senators Amedore and Martins for convening the Senate Task Force on Workforce Development and for seeking input from the business community. The employment gap is a real and troubling dilemma facing employees and employers alike. The

Capital Region, its businesses, and our community can only thrive if our workforce is equipped with the skills required for today's and tomorrow's jobs. We will continue our work, in conjunction with many partners, to bridge this skills gap."

### **TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Cultivate Forward-Facing Employment Data from the State Department of Labor:** While the current DOL data collection strategy underscores the reality of New York's employment opportunities, this data is rear-facing, and it can provide more tangible benefits to industries and job seekers by highlighting the areas that will need trained employees in coming years. The Task Force recommends an expansion of Department of Labor data to include forward-facing job data that can be used by employers and educators to accurately predict future needs and properly prepare the workforce for career opportunities.

- **Invest \$23 Million to Continue and Expand P-TECH Schools, and Make Them Permanent in State Statute:** College and career readiness is the new gauge used by education experts and advocates to show whether graduating students will be able to enter college without extra assistance/remediation and how likely a student will be to compete and attain gainful employment. New York State Pathways in Technology Schools, or "P-TECHs," are unique programs that allow students to obtain high school diplomas, while also earning a cost-free associates degree. The Task Force recommends committing \$23 million to support and expand P-Tech programs to other areas of the State to meet student demand and also codifying P-Tech programs into state law, providing them with a steady and reliable funding stream that eliminates uncertainty and gives reliability to participating students.

- **Increase Access to Career and Tech Programs at BOCES:** The Task Force recognizes the important role that BOCES plays in allowing school districts to share services and access career and tech programs that districts would not be able to develop in their individual

capacities. Recommendations to accomplish this include: having the State Education Department work with districts to remove some of the stigma associated with taking classes through BOCES; having districts work to encourage students to take advantage of the career and technical education services BOCES offers; and increase the current salary cap for BOCES from \$30,000 to \$50,000 to attract and retain qualified and skilled teachers for career and tech programs. Senate Republican budget proposals that have included the increase in the cap for the past two years.

· **Increase Access to Continuing Adult Education Programs at BOCES:** Training students through career and technical education is an important step towards ensuring New York has the infrastructure in place to have a workforce that can meet the growing demands of the State's economy and fill empty jobs in new, specialized fields. The Task Force recommends increasing funding for continuing adult education at BOCES to expand current programming and access.

· **Invest \$12 Million to Continue and Expand Early College High Schools, and Make Them Permanent in State Statute:** Early College High Schools offer a solution to college affordability and unpreparedness. They offer students unprecedented access to college credit-bearing courses in high school and help dramatically reduce the need for remediation post-graduation. Like P-TECH, these schools struggle without a reliable funding structure that inhibits their growth and expansion. While the State Education Department has advocated for \$7 million, the Task Force believes a larger investment of \$12 million is warranted for the growth and expansion of Early College High Schools, along with making them a permanent part of the education system.

· **Improve Participation in Apprenticeships by Promoting Coordination Between Guidance Counselors and Local Building Trades Councils:** The state Education Department, in consultation with the Department of Labor, is best suited to give guidance counselors the

tools they need to present to students the full complement of options available to them after high school, including apprenticeship programs that allow students to earn a paycheck while undergoing classroom learning under the supervision of a professional tradesman. The Task Force recommends the state Education Department issue guidelines to help school guidance counselors encourage and maximize valuable apprenticeship programs by coordinating with local building trades councils.

· **Increase Funding for the Next Generation Job Linkage Program and Enact the HIRE Program**

: The Task Force recommends increased support for the state's Job Linkage Program to foster direct links between community college training programs and the needs of local employers. In addition, the state should enact the Help Individuals Reach Employment (HIRE) program – first proposed in the Senate's 2015-16 one-house budget - to connect recent graduates with certificate programs. A qualified applicant who graduates from SUNY or CUNY, but cannot find full-time employment could apply for a certificate program to enhance their employment marketability. Such certificate programs would be tailored to job market needs and be made available to all eligible applicants free of charge, either on campus or online.

· **Establish New Degree or Certificate Programs Based on Future Regional Industry Needs:** The Task Force recommends requiring Regional Community College Councils to consult with and make recommendations to the community college boards of trustees on ways to create new degree or certificate programs, or restructure current programs, in order to increase successful job placement for future students. The Councils should also use Department of Labor data to consult with regional businesses to ensure their recommendations reflect actual need and facilitate student placement within those businesses.

The Task Force Members include: Senator Phil Boyle (R-C-I, Suffolk County), Senator Rich Funke (R-C-I, Fairport), Senator Joseph Griffo (R-C-I, Rome), Senator William Larkin (R-C,

Cornwall-on-Hudson), Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson), Senator Carl Marcellino (R, Syosset), Senator Kathleen Marchione (R-C, Halfmoon), Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), Senator Patricia Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), Senator Susan Serino (R, Hyde Park), Senator James L. Seward (R-C-I, Oneonta), Senator Michael Venditto (R-C-I, Massapequa), and Senator Catharine Young (R-I-C, Olean).

The full report with detailed findings and recommendations can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

### **ONGOING SENATE INVESTMENTS:**

The Task Force's report and recommendations are just the latest effort by the Senate Republican Conference to ensure all New Yorkers have the opportunity to pursue a good job and a rewarding career. In addition to the Senate's HIRE Program proposal and proposals to increase the BOCES salary cap mentioned in the recommendations above, this year's state budget included several smart investments in job training and workforce development initiatives that will help New Yorkers enhance their job skills, including:

- \$5 million for the Next Generation Job Linkage Program which works with employers to help identify potential jobs, define the skills necessary for those jobs, and provide the appropriate training to employees;

- \$5 million for the SUNY/CUNY Apprentice Initiative that provides targeted training to help employers refine the skills of their new hires, and enables more experienced employees to upgrade their skills;

- \$7.9 million for the Workforce Development Institute (WDI), a highly successful not-for-

profit that works with businesses and the AFL-CIO to provide focused training for workers, and workforce transition support to help prevent jobs from being outsourced to other states; and

- \$20 million in Additional Funding for Community Colleges, which play a key role in helping young people gain the skills and education that will increase their employment opportunities.