



**Testimony of Young Invincibles  
Before the Joint Legislative Hearing on the 2018-2019 Executive Budget**

**Workforce Development Hearing: January 24, 2018**

Good afternoon. My name is Marissa Martin, and I am the Northeast Director of Young Invincibles also known as “YI.” Young Invincibles is a national non-partisan policy and advocacy organization working to elevate the voices of, and expand economic opportunities for, today’s young adult generation. YI focuses on the intersection of higher education, health care, and workforce development and works to ensure that the interests of young adults are taken into account and included in policy conversations.

We are a founding member of the *Invest in Skills New York* campaign that is launching this year. The campaign is a statewide advocacy partnership between the employers and the economic and workforce development community aimed at making a skilled workforce an economic priority for the Governor and the New York State Legislature. We believe that together with the State we can institute and advance three key policy principles to build an education and workforce system that is responsive to current needs, and is adaptable to the changing nature of work. These principles are:

- **Funding and Scale:** New York needs stable state funding to scale evidence-based workforce development programs and practices;
- **Intentional System Design:** New York needs to deliberately align economic and workforce development strategies; and needs to connect the systems delivering education, job training and employment so that job- and career-seekers, and employers, engage in a seamless system of services;
- **Modernize Infrastructure:** New York needs to invest in workforce strategies based on data. The workforce system should rely on real-time labor market data and use an integrated data system to measure performance and to reduce duplication.

For years, advocates, providers, and businesses have continued to call on the government to invest in workforce development. We were excited to see that when Governor Cuomo delivered his State of the State address, he included many investments to strengthen workforce development and to prepare New Yorkers for the jobs of the future. With a young adult unemployment rate that is more than double the state’s overall unemployment rate, Young Invincibles is committed to ensuring that these investments provide opportunities for young adults throughout the State.

The Governor introduced four strategies to address the vast gap that exists throughout the state between the skills job seekers hold and the skills employers are seeking for their jobs. Most notably, he introduced the creation of a new \$175 million Consolidated Funding Application that will be funded through the Regional Economic Development Councils. The goals of these funds

are to support local short and long-term needs including improving talent pipelines, expanding apprenticeships, and expanding industries. However, this broad definition leaves a lot of room to question how this funding will be allocated and which short and long-term needs will be prioritized.

According to the State of the State, the \$175 million will be \$25 million in existing streams of workforce funding and \$150 million in new, flexible funding. Going forward, it will be critical to understand which existing streams of funding are being reallocated and to gain clarity on where the new flexible dollars are coming from.

The Governor also announced he will be creating a new Office of Workforce Development that will oversee all workforce training programs for the state including the Consolidated Fund Application. This is a vital solution to a series of communication challenges that providers, job seekers and businesses have faced for a long time. We are glad to see the Director will represent the administration throughout the state on the Workforce Investment Board, Strategic Implementation Assessment team and the Regional Community College Councils, and we aim to work with the Administration to make sure the new Director is able to serve as a bridge between all of the agencies that impact workforce development. Going forward, it is critical that the Office is accountable to the New York Legislature through public hearings, and is accountable to the general public through annual reporting requirements designed to ensure that information about Office activities is made widely available.

The creation of a One-Stop Shop for workers and businesses is also an essential solution to a challenge that has existed for a long time, and that we believe will ease the difficult process for job seekers looking to find resources to help them navigate their search processes. As the Director of the Office of Workforce Development will oversee this, it's once again vital that the state provides a clear breakdown of all of the resources available and how each of the agencies intersect.

Finally, data systems have long posed a major challenge for the state's workforce development systems. Currently the system a provider uses depends on the program and agency that allocates the funding stream. This makes it nearly impossible to have the data to map the workforce needs of New York's economy effectively. We support the Governor's announcement that the State would expand its capacity for data-driven workforce development planning and mapping the economy. As another initiative that will be led by the Director of the Office of Workforce Development, we hope that the administration will partner with providers, businesses, and education institutions to take this to scale and to ensure that all regions have the data they need to better target workforce investments and to attract talent and companies. Additionally, as the State works to improve access to data, they have a great opportunity to discuss how to streamline metrics throughout in order to create stronger reporting mechanisms.

Overall, Young Invincibles is pleased to see greater investment in the workforce development and the skills gap that exists in New York State, and we are committed to 1) Gaining greater clarification and understanding around the new Consolidated Funding Application, 2) Working

with the administration to find a strong Director of the Office of Workforce Development that understands the complex challenges of workforce development, and 3) Working with the Administration to ensure providers, business, and education institutions are included in conversations around improving our data systems.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and we hope we can partner with you to continue to monitor the Governor's workforce proposals outlined in this testimony.

For more information, please feel free to contact  
Northeast Director, Marissa Martin at [marissa.martin@younginvincibles.org](mailto:marissa.martin@younginvincibles.org).