

Baltimore Workforce Investment Board:
2007-2008 Public Policy Priorities

Overview

The Mayoral-appointed Baltimore Workforce Investment Board (BWIB) designs and executes the strategic and policy frameworks for the cutting edge programs and initiatives that the City's workforce development system offers. The BWIB strongly supports efforts to mold and build the City's current and future workforce to meet the needs of Baltimore's new, knowledge-based economy. The members of the BWIB have acquired a very strong knowledge-base and familiarity with workforce issues over the years. As a result, our Board members are well equipped to bring to bear their experience and expertise in a variety of subject matter areas on public policy developments in the local, regional and national workforce development arena. A Public Policy Committee was established in 2001 to advocate for legislative and budgetary initiatives in Annapolis and Washington that promote the City's ability to connect target populations to employment and improve education and job readiness services for all job seekers, including people with criminal records and ex-offenders. The Board's voice has been heard regularly in Annapolis and in Washington on behalf of policies, programs and budgetary initiatives that promote, enhance and help sustain Baltimore's workforce development system.

The BWIB membership reviews and approves the Board's Public Policy Priorities, prepared in draft by the Public Policy Committee, during the annual strategic planning retreat that takes place each year in September. The Public Policy Committee then takes the lead in educating elected officials on the BWIB's key legislative and budgetary priorities, coordinating expert testimony and the presentation of written materials during hearings and in other forums.

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Baltimore Workforce Investment Board: 2007-2008 Public Policy Framework

Chief among the indicators of a City's economic vitality is its ability to generate and fill substantial employment opportunities. Baltimore has made significant strides in recent years in the economic development arena, bringing substantial business investment to the City and creating new employment opportunities for its citizens. However, like other large urban centers, Baltimore faces many daunting challenges in building its workforce, reflecting a very unique set of local conditions.

Declining federal support for the nation's local workforce investment areas has resulted in Baltimore losing millions in funds that support the innovative employment and training initiatives offered by the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED), the City's workforce development agency and One-stop Career Center operator, and its workforce partners. The ongoing trend in reduced federal investments in local workforce areas occurs at a time when Baltimore City's unemployment and poverty rates remain stubbornly high, when thousands of ex-offenders in need training and jobs are returning to our neighborhoods each year, and when research shows that nearly 20,000 of the City's young people are not employed.

At the same time, Baltimore is confronting other significant workforce challenges. These include worker shortages across most industry sectors, the need to develop "on-ramps" to handle the job expansion that is anticipated in the coming years as a result of the Pentagon's 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions, and the need to create a continuous pipeline of workers to fill the thousands of job vacancies that will occur as the City's "baby boomer" generation retires.

Baltimore City's capacity to address both sides of the workforce equation – to ensure that businesses have a qualified pipeline of skilled workers and to connect job seekers to good jobs – underscores the vital importance and highlights the value of its local workforce development system. Every year, the City's One-stop Career Centers provide professional career and reemployment services to a record number of citizens and assist hundreds of employers to meet their staffing and training needs. Despite a precipitous decline in federal funding over the past six years, all federal Workforce Investment Act performance measures have been exceeded, thousands of training activities have been provided and more than 5,000 City's adult residents have obtained employment each year. Similarly, the local workforce system's school-based initiatives and programs for out-of-school youth enable thousands of young people to gain valuable summer work experience and connect to internships or career growth employment opportunities. Baltimore's workforce system, which is closely aligned with the City's economic development efforts, is poised to expand its capacity to leave no one behind and help guarantee the economic stability of the City's residents.

The BWIB's Public Policy Priorities for 2007-2008 recognize the serious challenges that the local workforce development system faces, chief among them declining federal appropriations and the need to advocate *against* recurring efforts in the U.S. House of Representatives to rescind carryover funds that remain in the federal Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) account. With little hope for the reauthorization of WIA before 2008, if then, it is imperative that the BWIB continue to endorse level WIA funding and oppose the \$335 million rescission in WIA funds that is included in the House-passed FFY 2008 Labor-Health and Human Services-Education spending bill. With these federal priorities in the forefront, and acknowledging the other workforce challenges that Baltimore is facing, the BWIB will continue to strongly advocate for budgetary and legislative initiatives in both the Maryland General Assembly and the U.S. Congress that will promote, enhance and expand Baltimore City's workforce development system.

Policy Priorities for the 2008 Maryland General Assembly

↴ State Funding for Maryland's Workforce Delivery System

Strongly advocate and promote the need for State general funds to ensure adequate resources are available to support Maryland's workforce delivery system.

↴ Full Funding for the Maryland Summer Youth Connection Program

Strongly advocate for full funding for the Maryland Summer Youth Connection program, established during the 2005 session of the Maryland General Assembly (Senate Bill 586, Chapter 322, Acts of 2005) to provide disadvantaged students with paid summer work experiences.

↴ Position Baltimore City's Existing and Emerging Workforce for BRAC

Strongly support legislative and budgetary initiatives that engage the workforce development and education systems in a partnership effort to prepare Baltimore City residents for BRAC employment opportunities and also for the tertiary jobs that will become available in the Construction and Building Trades and other industry sectors as a result of base realignment.

↴ Training for Job Seekers and Low-Wage Incumbent Workers, and Adult Literacy and Workplace Literacy Training

Continue to support legislation and budgetary initiatives that assist Baltimore's job seekers and low-wage workers to access training opportunities that help them overcome education and skills deficits and gain entrance into needed adult and workplace literacy programs.

↴ Training for Incarcerated Individuals and People with Criminal Records

Continue to support legislative and budgetary initiatives that promote the employability of previously incarcerated adults, including efforts to provide skills training and literacy services to a greater number than is presently served.

Continue support of legislative and budgetary initiatives that enhance the employability of incarcerated individuals and increase their likelihood to connect to employment quickly upon re-entry, including adult education and literacy services.

↴ Education, Training and Job Placement Services for Disconnected Youth

Support legislative and budgetary initiatives that provide youth who are disengaged from work and school with a menu of education and career development options that lead to positive employment outcomes.

Policy Priorities for the 110th Congress

↴ Federal Appropriations

Oppose the House spending bill, which includes report language that would rescind \$335 million in FY 2006 Department of Labor WIA carryover funds. If enacted, the House language would translate into a \$2.614 million cut in workforce funding for Maryland and a \$716,009 cut to Baltimore City.

The loss of over \$700,000 in WIA funds would be devastating to Baltimore's efforts to help job seekers find viable employment and support the workforce needs of our local businesses. A rescission of FY 2006 funds will result in the closure of at least one of Baltimore's three remaining one-stops, equating to the following loss of services: 5,000 City residents would be unable to access one-stop services; 1,000 will not get jobs; 200 will not receive computer literacy training; 100 will not receive customized training or Individual Training Accounts; 60 employers will not receive recruitment and training services. In addition, 300 Baltimore City youth will not receive career development and supportive services.

⬇ Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

Support WIA reauthorization legislation that builds upon the progress already achieved in the evolving private sector-led local workforce investment system, strengthens the authority and flexibility of local elected office, increases funding for local workforce investment areas and excludes any semblance block granting or expenditure ceilings for formula funding grants.

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