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## **NEW INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES UNDER THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT**

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**Friday, May 29, 2009**

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Higher Education,  
Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness,  
Committee on Education and Labor  
Washington, DC**

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The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:15 a.m. at the Nevada State College, Dawson Building, 1021 East Paradise Hills Drive, Henderson, Nevada, Hon. Ruben Hinojosa [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Members Present: Representatives Hinojosa and Titus.

Staff Present: Paulette M. Acevedo; Ricardo Martinez, Policy Advisor.

Chairman HINOJOSA. A quorum is present. The hearing of the Subcommittee on Higher Education will come to order.

Pursuant to the committee rules, any member may submit an opening statement in writing which will be made part of the permanent record.

I now recognize myself, followed by my colleague, who will make opening statements. Without objection, all members will have 14 days to submit additional materials or questions for the hearing record. I would like to make my statement and then make some privileged statements.

### **STATEMENT OF THE HON. RUBÉN HINOJOSA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Chairman HINOJOSA. Good morning. Welcome to the Higher Education Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness Subcommittee's fifth hearing, in preparation for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, known as WIA.

This is also our second field hearing for the 111th Congress and I would like to personally thank Congresswoman Dina Titus and the Nevada State College for hosting us.

These hearings are of critical importance. The last time we reauthorized the Workforce Investment Act was in 1998. The Workforce Investment Act was designed to streamline and coordinate our job training programs. It was supposed to provide a one stop system of workforce development that would serve workers and employers alike.

After 11 years the system is long overdue for an upgrade. Time is of the essence. Last month our economy shed another 539,000 jobs, bringing the total to 5.7 million jobs lost since the beginning of the rescission in December 2007.

Never in my lifetime have we needed a workforce investment system to deliver more for our economy than right now.

We have taken bold and swift action with the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which will infuse approximately four billion—yes, B as in boy—\$4 billion into our workforce investment systems. It is imperative that our workforce investment system be up to the challenge.

We have much to learn from Nevada. As one of the fastest growing regions in the entire country, Nevada has seen its demand for many adult services, such as English as a second language and job training, skyrocket. As one of the hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis, Nevada is on the front lines of the economic crisis.

Today we will hear from experts on the ground. These are the people who are working to reconnect disconnected youth, who are preparing individuals for green jobs, who are addressing our workforce needs in high growth areas, such as health care, and who are insuring that individuals with disabilities are getting the vocational and rehabilitative support they need to work and live independently.

I would like to thank our witnesses today for joining us, and for the work you do every day to strengthen our workforce. It is invaluable for our subcommittee to have the opportunity to get outside of Washington, D.C. and visit the communities that our federal policy and programs are intended to serve.

Thank you to the hosts for having us and thank you for your testimony to the witnesses.

I would like to yield to my good friend, a valuable member of the subcommittee, Congresswoman Dina Titus, for an opening statement.

[The statement of Mr. Hinojosa follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Rubén Hinojosa, Chairman, Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness**

Good Morning. Welcome to the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee's fifth hearing in preparation for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. This is also our second field hearing for the 111th Congress, and I would like to personally thank Congresswoman Dina Titus and the Nevada State College for hosting us.

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Thank you for hosting us and thank you for your testimony.

I would now like to yield to my good friend, a valuable new member of the Subcommittee, Rep. Dina Titus, for an opening statement.

**STATE OF THE HON. DINA TITUS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN  
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEVADA**

Ms. TITUS. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling for today's Congressional hearing to look at innovations and best practices for the renewal of the Workforce Investment Act. It is an honor to have the committee meet here at Nevada State College in District Three, that I represent, especially on a topic that is so critical to Nevada.

Since the economic recession began in December of 2007 Nevada has endured a number of foreclosures. This district is one of the highest in the country for foreclosures, and the unemployment rate has soared to the highest that it's been in 25 years.

This Congress inherited a deep economic crisis that will not turn around overnight. But I'm proud of the fact that as the Chairman pointed out, we have taken some dramatic steps to put our nation on the path to recovery, when we passed the stimulus package that will save or create millions of jobs, including 34,000 here in Nevada.

Now recent statistics show a glimmer of hope that perhaps we've at least reached the bottom of this recession, but we know that our work is far from over. Creating more jobs in Southern Nevada remains one of my top priorities and I know that Congress must take bold action to help put Americans and Nevadans back to work.

That's why I'm really encouraged by the enthusiasm of the Education and Labor Committee with the emphasis that the Chairman has put on the hearings and reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act.

It is a very important part of our efforts to fix the economy and I stand committed to working with the Chairman and across the aisle to have a spirit of bipartisanship as we move forward in this with this new legislation.

The WIA, or Workforce Investment Act, is designed to coordinate and consolidate and improve employment and training and literacy and just opportunities for the future, and that's why it is so critical that we move forward with this today. And I think our panel reflects just a wide sweep of the kinds of things that can be included as we look at restructuring this act.

We're going to hear about training for health care professionals, youth activities, so we don't lose those young people, vocational rehabilitation and placement for individuals with disabilities, whom I've worked with a long time in the Legislature, and of course

green jobs. That is the new economy, the economy of the future, and Nevada needs to be ready to harness it.

So I want to thank all of you who have come out to attend today, this important hearing. It's an honor to represent you and have you here.

I also want to point out that unlike many legislative hearings where they take public comment, we in our Congressional hearings, we're not able to take public comment. But for us to be successful as we move forward, we need to hear from all of you who are in this room, and that would include a broad range of voices and ideas in addition to those who are the official witnesses.

So, although you can't provide public comment here, I would greatly appreciate it if you would submit your comments for the record, and we can put them in the record, and you can send them to me. There are several ways that you can do that, either with the form you find on the back of the room to submit notes, anything you want to submit, or you can do it on the website. And so I thank you for that feedback.

Also, thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for bringing your committee to Las Vegas. This is a very important topic for Southern Nevada, and we are looking forward to sharing some of the things that are going on here with you.

So thank you very much, and I look forward to an insightful and thought provoking hearing today.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you. It is a pleasure to work with Dina. As Congresswoman of this area she is your voice, she is your representative, and works hard. I'm delighted to have her on my subcommittee because she is not afraid of hard work, long hours, and the horrible trip back and forth every week or every two weeks from Washington to her home district.

So I thank you and I look forward to this hearing. You should know that after five Congressional hearings, one in Albany, New York, and the others in Washington, D.C., and today here in Nevada, we believe that we are gathering information that is very necessary for us to be able to start writing the legislation and hopefully be able to debate in our committee in July, be able to take it to the House floor and debate among the 435 members that compose the U.S. Congress.

I can say that we have heard from witnesses through previous hearings that have given us hope that in this rewrite of the reauthorization of WIA that we will be able to find the way in which to restructure workforce development boards so that the greater amount of money will be going towards training students, young, middle-aged, and senior adults.

The reason is that at least the last 11 years we found that there wasn't enough regulation to try to hold the amount of money that was being given to the subcontractors in profits and the cost of operating so many offices and centers that were being utilized so that 40 percent or less of the money coming from Washington went towards training students.

We want to turn that around. We would like to see 60 percent or more of the federal money going towards training and the balance for what I mentioned earlier.

Having said that, I am proud to be in my 13th year in Congress serving on this committee, and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, which I think is this campus here is a good example of what I fight for.

We know that the average lifetime earnings of a student who graduates from high school is \$500,000. But those who graduate from college can expect a lifetime income of \$1 million. So that would certainly improve the quality of life for their families, the region that they live in, and certainly paying taxes to help us with what is required and that is infrastructure, to be able to keep expanding.

You are the envy of many states as one of the fastest growing regions in the country. The area that I represent in deep south Texas was trailing just behind you. So it gives me great pleasure to come and see it for myself what is it that y'all have done, and of course downtown Las Vegas and all the expansion going on there is proof of the success that you have had. Only in Dubai, and Abu Dhabi and those areas that are rich with oil have we seen something that even comes close to what I saw downtown yesterday when I came in.

So today's hearing is going to be directed at having a trained workforce, and I also was delighted to meet so many people prior to getting started, and one particular that caught my attention was Kenneth LoBene, director for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development here in this area, and working with the youth council.

I believe that the group that y'all are working with, ages of 15 to 25, have so much potential. But unfortunately, materials that I read indicate that we have a very high dropout rate and are not finishing high school, but that's not just here in Nevada, that's throughout the country. If you were at one of our last hearings, the people who testified from Detroit, Michigan told us that there are some pockets of 70 percent dropout rate from their high schools.

That's why it's so important that we listen to these witnesses and others who are in the audience because I honestly believe that there are solutions.

With a new president with the Obama administration making the kind of commitment of \$787 billion in the stimulus plan, monies that go out throughout the country for so many different ways of in which we can create jobs, and infrastructure, I believe there is hope.

The folks that I hear on CNN and other stations on TV tell us that there's reason to believe that we are somewhere close to finishing and ending this recession that has been one of the longest we've had in the last 50 years.

So we're going to proceed and I'm going to start by introducing the panelists. The first one that I will present is Brian Patchett, president and CEO Easter Seals Southern Nevada.

Our first witness has been an advocate for over 20 years for people with disabilities and improving quality of life and promoting independence. He has worked for the Utah Assistive Technology program, training people to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is extremely important to us in our country.

Mr. Patchett graduated from Utah State University with degrees in political science in 1992, and then went on to study at Syracuse University and earned master's degrees in public administration and rehabilitation counseling.

He is one of 49 million Americans classified as disabled, but this has not hindered his education or professional goals. He has worked for Eastern Seals in Washington and Arizona and in Southern Nevada, where he has served as the president and CEO since 2004.

Mr. Patchett has received many awards in his career and he and his wife, Stacy, are the proud parents of six children, and we are very happy to welcome you this morning.

The next panelist will be Chris Brooks, Director, Bombard Renewable Energy. Mr. Brooks has been a journeyman, wireman in the State of Nevada for the past 17 years and is a certified master electrician. He is certified by the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners and also has the state required OSHA PV installers license.

Mr. Brooks is the founding member of Solar Nevada, the local chapter of the American Solar Energy Society, where he currently serves as their vice president. Mr. Brooks is also been appointed to the Nevada Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency task force. Welcome this morning and you have all of our attention regarding your certifications.

The next person, next witness, Ms. Chanda Cook, Nevada Public Education Foundation. As director of community initiatives, Ms. Cook has taken an active leadership role for the foundation in reducing high school dropout rates and graduating students that are prepared for the workforce and higher education priorities.

Prior to her current position she spent more than a decade in corporate community relations with Nevada Power, focusing on programs that supported energy education, as well as math, science and technology.

Ms. Cook has been active on education issues at the local, and the state and national levels. Locally she has a long history of involvement with the Clark County School District, which is the fifth largest in the entire nation.

She also has been appointed by the governor to serve as the parent representative to the Nevada Commission on Educational Excellence and will be sharing her thoughts with us today on Nevada youth, as well as sharing her concerns for our youth nationally.

Ms. Cook has a bachelor of arts degree in social work from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, and has continued her education with participation in the Harwood Institute for Public Leadership. Welcome.

Next presenter is Ms. Rebecca Metty-Burns. She is the Interim Director, Division for Workforce and Economic Development, College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas.

Ms. Metty-Burns is responsible for overseeing the industry workforce programs in the division, as well as community and personal enrichment courses, grant funded GED, and English as a second language courses in the prison program.



The Division provides industry courses in health care, in manufacturing, in hospitality, and operates an OSHA training institute education center.

Before joining CSN, Ms. Metty-Burns had 16 years experience as a human resources leader directing employee training and human resources projects. She holds a BA in economics from the University of Alaska in Anchorage, and she holds an MBA from the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

This morning we look forward to her comments regarding the training of individuals for the health care industry. Welcome to you and all the other witnesses and now we are ready to hear from everyone, and we will start with you, Mr. Patchett—excuse me, let me take this opportunity to say something about the lights that you are going to see operating here in front of you.

For those of you who have not testified before this subcommittee, let me explain our lighting system and the five-minute rule.

Everyone, including members, is limited to five minutes of presentation or questioning. The green light is illuminated when you begin to speak. When you see the yellow light, it means you have one minute remaining. When you see the red light, it means your time has expired and you need to try to conclude your testimony.

Please be certain as you testify to turn on and speak into the microphone in front of you so that we can have all of the participants and the audience hear you clearly.

Now we'll hear from our first witness, Mr. Patchett.

**STATEMENT OF BRIAN PATCHETT, PRESIDENT AND CEO,  
EASTER SEALS OF SOUTHERN NEVADA**

Mr. PATCHETT. Thank you very much, Chairman Hinojosa and Congresswoman Titus. It's a pleasure to be here to speak with you this morning and I also want to recognize Erin Fox next to me. Her job is to tell me when the lights are properly colored because I don't see the lights from here.

What I would like to talk about today is people with disabilities and employment. I think as we look at the rehabilitation act, which is now the fourth, or is also part of the WIA Act that we have, there are a couple of things I want to emphasize and that is universal design, and I want to talk about transition and I want to talk about assistive technology and a couple of things.

But first I think it's important to understand, we talk about the challenges we have with the economy today. We talk about unemployment, and Mr. Chairman, you mentioned some of those statistics and the things that are going on. And it is very concerning and even more concerning is the impact on people with disabilities.

As we think about individuals generally throughout the country and here in Nevada we look at roughly 71 percent of people that could be employed are employed. When you look at people with disabilities, that number is 23 percent. 23 percent of individuals with disabilities are employed. And when we talk about unemployment statistics right now, we talk about roughly nine percent, maybe ten percent of people with, in general being unemployed in this economic downturn that we are in. Among people with disabilities who are employed, that 23 percent we talked about, we are talking

about a number closer to 15 percent, roughly 14.5 percent. Very significant.

So that impact is definitely felt by individuals with disabilities, and as you mentioned, I am a person with a disability. I've had the opportunity to be a person who went through the vocational rehabilitation system, was very much helped through that system. It changed my life. I was able to pursue my graduation and I am where I am today.

Unfortunately, many still are not. And I think that's what the key is, as I'm talking, is how we get to that, that issue.

I also want to recognize a couple people that are here and thank them. We have Director Mosley of DETR, which is the Department of Employment and Rehabilitation Training. His leadership is amazing right now, in trying to change and turn things around in Nevada.

Also Debra Brown, from vocational rehabilitation and so many of the staff are there. Things they are doing, especially over the last year, have been wonderful and thank you Congresswoman Titus for all of the efforts you made over the years and worked at the Legislature to help persons with disabilities.

Let's talk about universal design and I think the easiest way to think about this is when you think about a WIA place or a work site place for training or for information about jobs. Here we call them the Job Connect sites.

A person goes there to get information about jobs, maybe get some training related to jobs, and to find jobs. And I think about, we think about that related to people without disabilities or people with disabilities, what we need to be able to get to is thinking about all people together.

One of the challenges we have right now is that if a person walks into one of these sites and they have a disability, or they come in using a wheelchair or whatever, that site may not be accessible to them, programatically or also technologically. They may not be able to access the computers at that site, they may not be able to—the individuals working there may not be able to help them to be able to build their resumes to be able to search for jobs.

We need to start thinking about people with disabilities and people without disabilities together under the Workforce Investment Act. In 1973 the Rehabilitation Act was passed. It became part of WIA 11 years ago, as has been mentioned. We need to somehow figure out how to further blur the lines so that whenever somebody needs services for employment, regardless of ability, they can receive those services.

Second, I want to talk about transition services. One of the things that makes a significant difference is the kind of services a person gets as they are coming through school, are they being prepared for employment, are they getting adequate career counseling, adequate education, adequate job experience.

One of the challenges we have still within the act is how do we get at preparing students, high school students to make that transition from school to work. And quite often in both these areas one of the challenges is assistive technology. Assistive technology are devices that help someone with a disability to be able to get a job

or to be able to keep a job. And certainly that becomes a challenge as it relates to employment for some of us with disabilities.

I'd also add that sometimes the 90 days that when someone is employed through voc rehab, that that employment, once that person has been employed for 90 days, the case is closed.

I argue, I think in my written testimony, and I would argue here that that's not long enough. We need to be able to spend more time following up with individuals with disabilities. Maybe it's six months, I don't know, maybe it's longer than that. And I'd go ahead and close there.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Mr. Patchett, I want to yield an extra minute to you to complete your thoughts.

Mr. PATCHETT. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And yet, as we look at trying to create this system that's more friendly to helping persons with disabilities, and trying to get from transition from school to work or through that process, again back to the 90 days, that I think about when I got my first job, and even when I got this job as CEO, it took a lot longer than 90 days to become used to this job.

We need to be able to follow along, as vocational rehab professionals, longer than 90 days. If we can do that, we can guarantee employment to last longer. A good percentage of people who become employed as persons with disabilities, at 90 days the case is closed. A good percentage of those people within 20 days of that 90 days, so basically 110 days, then lose that job. So we need to extend that, and my recommendation is to go six months and that would—

Chairman HINOJOSA. I assure you that your entire record, written record statement, rather your entire statement will be part of the record of today's hearing.

[The statement of Mr. Patchett follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Brian Patchett, President and CEO,  
Easter Seals of Southern Nevada**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, my name is Brian Patchett. I am currently the President/CEO of Easter Seals Southern Nevada, a non-profit organization serving children and adults with disabilities. I have spent much of my life working with the Vocational Rehabilitation system. I was first a client of these services as a young man and later a professional in the field of rehabilitation. Today, I would like to share with you some of my personal experiences in conjunction with addressing some of the key issues that need attention when looking at the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), specifically in the area of Vocational Rehabilitation. Within that context I will identify important improvements that can be made that will provide greater access to employment for people with disabilities.

Some of the areas where improvements can be made include: universal design, supported employment, school to work transition, and access to assistive technology. I would also like to discuss our proposal related to employment opportunity for people with disabilities in the field weatherization and green jobs.

As I said above, my experience with Voc Rehab has been both as a client and as a professional. I became legally blind at age seven when blood vessels burst across the macula leaving a residue of scar tissue that impaired my vision. As a child after my vision loss, it became very important to me to not be perceived as having a disability. I did everything I could to prove I was a typical boy from playing sports including soccer, football and track and field to attending public school with my peers. I discovered I could do many things well and also found my limitations. For example, I found I couldn't play baseball.

When I turned 18, I had my first experience with Vocational Rehabilitation services. I was asked to sit in a room and put together nuts and bolts. I was then given an IQ test. This path would have led me to a sheltered workshop. Thankfully, I left

that situation, went to college and eventually earned Masters' Degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling and Public Administration from Syracuse University.

My professional career related to disability services began when I started working as an undergraduate through a university affiliated program with the Tech Act Grant in the field of Assistive Technology. I became an expert in assistive technology and legislation regarding persons with disabilities. In addition to working on disability innovation at the state level, I also got a world wide view of disability issues when I traveled with Mobility International USA to the former Soviet Union. The two summers I spent as a student ambassador in Russia becoming fluent in the language and promoting disability awareness were remarkable and deeply impacted my philosophy and understanding of disability on a global scale.

When I reached graduate school, I was prepared to continue my expertise in assistive technology and co-taught the course on assistive technology to my peers. Upon graduation from Syracuse University and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, I became a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). I was hired by Easter Seals Washington as their Eastern Washington Regional Director and Director of Assistive Technology and have continued, for the past 13 years, to work for positive change and greater independence for persons with disabilities within the framework of Easter Seals. I left Easter Seals Washington to take the position of Vice-President of Programs for Easter Seals Arizona. And for the last five years, I have served as President/CEO for Easter Seals Southern Nevada.

During all these years, as a student and professional, I have worked closely with Vocational Rehabilitation programs in several states. I have watched the evolution of the Rehab Act to today when it has been reauthorized as WIA Title IV or the Rehab Act. And, I have been directly involved in serving thousands of people with disabilities.

I know what it is for a person with a disability to run into barriers in finding employment and even in barricades within the Voc Rehab system. My undergraduate studies were in Political Science and International Studies and, at one point, I was applying for a job as a congressional intern in Washington D.C. During my interview, the hirer from the congressman's office asked me about my disability. When I explained my disability, the individual then asked how I ever thought I could work in a congressional office given my disability, and even wondered out loud why I had even applied for the job. This experience was a powerful and personal representation of discrimination and has motivated me to want to change the perceptions people with disabilities endure and help create more effective service delivery for persons with disabilities.

#### *Easter Seals Southern Nevada*

Easter Seals Southern Nevada (ESSN) is a non-profit Nevada corporation dedicated to providing the highest quality services to persons with disabilities and their families. Easter Seals nationally believes in full participation of persons with disabilities in our communities and throughout society. Our mission and vision are specific: To create solutions that help people with disabilities become self sufficient through education, community partnerships and direct services. Our services include the following:

##### *Early intervention:*

We offer services for children with special needs, ages birth to three, in their natural family environment. Our goal is to help them develop and learn so they can reach developmental milestones and become more successful when entering school.

##### *Wonders of our World Child Development Center:*

We offer child care for children of all abilities, ages 6 weeks to 8 years of age. Our child care uses Creative Curriculum, develops family plans for all children, and focuses on the strengths in every child to create a fun place to learn and grow.

##### *Autism services:*

We provide in-home ABA instruction and social skills training to children with autism, ages 3 to 8. We also offer parent training and support to help families learn about autism, accept the challenges ahead and become more educated and independent advocates for their child.

##### *Family respite:*

We provide qualified families with a voucher each month to help assist with the cost of obtaining respite services for their child with a disability. Parents choose a provider they know and trust and Easter Seals assists with voucher reimbursement to help cover the cost.

*Adult day services:*

We give adults with significant disabilities the opportunity to experience community activities that maximize their self help, socialization and daily living skills in a safe, age appropriate daily program.

*Supported living assistance:*

We provide support to people with disabilities in all aspects of independent living to ensure they can remain active, contributing members of their community. Our goal is to assist each person in reaching the highest level of independence that they are able to achieve, while living in their own home.

*Assistive technology:*

We provide evaluations, workplace assessments, training and any other tool necessary to assist people with disabilities to be successful in employment, education, recreation and independent living. We provide services in the home and also in our state of the art assistive technology lab.

*Employment and rehabilitation:*

We offer a full employment program for adults with disabilities, providing work skills training and pre-employment assessment. Individuals work within our warehouse facility or at one of our community worksites, doing real work and earning a paycheck which furthers their ultimate goal of independence.

*Employment and the Rehab Act*

This year, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the official unemployment rate for people with disabilities, meaning those who have lost their jobs and those who are actively seeking employment, for the first quarter of 2009 was hovered between 13 and 14%, 5 to 6 percentage points higher than the non-disabled population. While this statistic is alarming, even more troubling is the lack of labor force participation by people with disabilities. BLS reported that for the same time period only 23% of all adults with disabilities participated in the labor force as compared with 71% of the non-disabled population. Further, those individuals with disabilities who can find jobs are more likely to have less job experience and are more likely to earn lower incomes than individuals without disabilities.

In Nevada, we have historically not provided adequate rehabilitation services for many reasons. Our challenges have ranged from leaving federal money on the table because of our unwillingness to match the dollars and now our inability to do so because of the economic situation. There are too few rehabilitation counselors to meet the needs in Nevada. Recruiting qualified rehabilitation counselors has been difficult especially with the state not having a university program which prepares individuals to sit for the CRC Exam. Additionally, the state is not adequately able to contract out for job development and assistive technology services, leaving potential workers in the ranks of the unemployed.

These challenges along with those I will outline in the next sections are what continue to keep individuals with disabilities from employment at the same level as their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, many rehabilitation programs across the country lack appropriate philosophical leadership, in other words, the leadership may not be people with disabilities or people who truly understand the challenges facing those of us with disabilities.

*Universal Design*

Creating universally designed systems for access to jobs, job information, career planning, and general person-centered services is one of the greatest challenges facing persons with disabilities in Nevada and throughout the country. Imagine a person who has significant physical disabilities and uses a wheelchair. He or she is unable to access a standard computer work station including standard keyboard, mouse at a workforce development site, (called Job Connects in Nevada). Not only is the computer station inaccessible but the staff members who are there help the individual in finding employment have not received proper training on how to assist a person with a disability. Success for this individual at Job Connects is all but impossible and he or she leaves the site frustrated, deflated, and unable to pursue employment.

Unfortunately, this example is the case too many times and even though WIA seems to address this issue, it has not been addressed strongly enough. A workforce development site should be required to meet the standards of universal design. The term "universal design for the workforce development system" means the design of environments, products and communication practices as well as the delivery of programs, services and activities to meet the needs of all customers of the workforce development system.

Staff should be adequately trained to work with individuals with disabilities as a facet of any professional development activity. A work station or stations should contain appropriate assistive technology hardware and software such as the work stations Easter Seals Southern Nevada has designed for libraries. The technology would be there to serve virtually every individual with a disability and available staff would be trained on how to assist those who need to access these assistive technologies. Such technologies would benefit not only job seekers with disabilities, but also individuals who may have age related vision impairments or hearing loss as well as any number of other challenges to using computers.

I have attached supporting documents that outline of what we at Easter Seals Southern Nevada can do to assist in creating universal design. Additionally, every WIA Jobs Connects or workforce development site should be required to meet the standards of universal design. Any vendor operating such a site would be expected to make sure their site is programmatically and physically accessible to persons with disabilities and their contract would indicate that they would be audited on an annual basis to ensure that they meet the standards of universal design.

#### *Supported Employment*

After a person is determined to be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation, he or she develops an Individualized Plan for Employment or an IPE. This IPE is to be person-center which means the person with the disability determines the career path and together with the rehabilitation counselor outlines goals and supports needed to achieve the employment outcomes desired. These supports might include: career counseling, job training, education, job shadowing, job coaching, and career exploration accessing assistive technology services and devices.

Unfortunately, my experience has been that this doesn't always occur. In fact, many who become employed often are not adequately prepared for that employment and do not receive all of the supports needed to be successful long term. Job coaching and especially assistive technology are areas that are usually lacking in this process—both of which are critical components of job maintenance.

Additionally, the VR system counts a person as having a successful outcome if they have been placed into a job and continue at that job for ninety days. At that point services from Voc Rehab stop. This has often been referred to as “the 26” or case closure. Unfortunately, evidence shows that many people end up losing that job within 20 days of that closure because supports have ended. I ask the question: “How many of us, after three months of a job really have a grasp of what we are doing?” I think most of us would say that it takes at least six months to a year for us to become comfortable with a new position. Thus, I believe we should change the Voc Rehab system to allow for longer supports.

#### *Access to Assistive Technology*

“John” is a 35 year old. He has cerebral palsy and uses a wheel chair for mobility. He was able to find a job as a Customer Service representative in a call center, but John's rehabilitation counselor did not authorize assistive technology services prior to employment and as John was nearing the end of his probationary 90 days at work—his employer expressed concerns regarding his productivity level. Easter Seals was contacted to respond to the crisis and identify technology that could save John's job. After completing the evaluation, voice input software and adaptations to his work station were recommended. However, prior to the authorizations and approvals being completed, John lost his job.

This true story demonstrates challenges faced by the vast majority of persons with significant disabilities in the Voc Rehab system. Receiving adequate assistive technology services and devices is consistently the place Voc Rehab here in NV falls down the most. Voc Rehab is intended to be a system designed to help persons with disabilities find employment. But the fact is that many states limit those they serve to the most significantly disabled because of funding restraints. And, persons with the most significant disabilities are most likely to need assistive technology devices in order to perform the essential functions of a job.

Assistive technology is a device or service which helps a person to access some part of life. Assistive technology may be an adapted keyboard for someone who has difficulty typing or voice input for someone who is unable to type at all; software that enlarges characters and images on a screen for an individual who is visually impaired; Braille output for persons who are blind; adjustable desks for persons using mobility devices such as a wheelchair; and, augmentative communication devices that allow a person who is non-verbal to communicate.

To be a successful user of assistive technology, one must be given access to the evaluation and exploration process which includes learning about and selecting appropriate technology which will help one to be successful. In the case of employ-

ment, it is necessary to become successful at using assistive technology in order to perform the essential functions of a job.

The assistive technology evaluation should take place as early as possible. Once the IPE is established, this should be one of the first priorities. The person should then receive the technology recommended in the assistive technology evaluation and sufficient training should follow on the device or devices.

With this preparation, the person will then be able to confidently talk with employers about how they can perform the essential functions of a job and be confident in performing that job with their assistive technology. In fact, the individual would then become the expert on the technology they use.

Using screen enlargement and voice output software has completely changed my life and made it possible for me to be successful academically and in my career as a CEO of a significant non-profit organization.

The following outline again the important components of any successful assistive technology process:

1. Person center assistive technology evaluation, including exploration and hands on trying the technology.
2. Acquisition of assistive technology.
3. Adequate training on use of assistive technology.
4. Follow-up and assistance in implementation at job site (this may also include a through jobsite analysis).

If this process is followed, the person may be expected to be more successful in their career. I do want to emphasize that a person needs to have adequate time prior to job interviewing and actual employment to become expert on their technology. Just like being proficient on a computer or having appropriate education before entering a job, a person must have expertise, experience and confidence in using their assistive technology before they become employed.

#### *School to Work Transition*

Preparing high school students with disabilities for the world of work has been one of the great challenges for the Voc Rehab system. My experience as a consumer of VR services and as a program partner in several states, including here in NV, has led me to conclude that few states provide this service in any meaningful way.

Four years ago, I had the opportunity of working with Karla Macomb, a wonderful disability advocate and leader in Nevada for many years, on a proposal to the Voc Rehab system four years ago for transition services. This proposal was initially accepted and Easter Seals Southern Nevada was asked to begin the process to provide services in Nevada. Unfortunately, the program we envisioned was watered down significantly and Easter Seals no longer provides these services. The state continues to provide some transition services in conjunction with the schools, but some of the critical components are completely non-existent.

According to the Rehab Act, transition from school to work should begin at age sixteen and may begin as early as age fourteen. To be successful, Voc Rehab and the schools should work together to create a system that begins the transition process for students with disabilities by age sixteen. Ideally, these students would receive the following services:

- Career exploration
- Career counseling
- Assistive technology
- Job shadowing
- Summer employment
- Mobility training (i.e. access to buses, etc.)
- Resume building
- College exploration
- Eventual employment

Most of us growing up, held summer jobs and had our first experience with work while in high school. Some of us even received work experience at an earlier age. I personally began delivering newspapers when I was 8 years old and continued this job into my teens. I subsequently held other valuable summer jobs that prepared me for the adult work force. If WIA Title IV could focus more on transition and helping teenagers with disabilities in conjunction with the school to have positive job shadowing and work experiences, I believe we would see more than the 23% of persons with disabilities in the work force.

#### *Weatherization and Green Jobs and People with Disabilities*

Easter Seals Southern Nevada is proposing to utilize persons from the vocational rehabilitation system and individuals with intellectual disabilities to provide weatherization of homes and manufacturing of solar panels. This is a wonderful win-win

opportunity where we can combine the desire to create a green economy along with entering persons with disabilities into green jobs at the outset and creation of these new markets. Thus we have proposed the following:

Easter Seals Southern Nevada (ESSN) has proposed developing partnerships with companies that manufacture “green” products, establishing a weatherization program, and allowing workers to be trained in skills that will be valuable in emerging markets. For example, Sea Group Ltd. is a manufacturing company specializing in solar energy applications and is interested in working with people with disabilities through Easter Seals Southern Nevada to assemble, package, ship/deliver and install energy-saving products.

In partnership with Sea Group, ESSN is in negotiations with the City of Las Vegas to provide homes with a pressurized water heater system, including installation, via government subsidization funding to homeowners. In addition, the City of Las Vegas has an interest in implementing cost saving energy heating consumption at its community pools and other buildings under their jurisdiction with the products provided via Easter Seals from Sea Group. Sea Group Ltd. specializes in solar energy applications and will provide the raw materials for individuals with disabilities to assemble, package, ship/deliver, and install solar thermal panels and other energy saving products. Through Sea Group, ESSN is proposing to provide 1,000 homes, via government subsidies, with pressurized water heater systems, including installation. In addition, the City of Las Vegas is interested in implementing cost saving by reducing energy heating consumption at its municipal pools and buildings through products provided by ESSN via Sea Group Ltd. This project will involve a partnership with the State Use Program (Preferred Purchase) to contract directly with ESSN to purchase these products.

This “green” job initiative is among the many projects we have developed that will allow us to train dislocated workers for opportunities and careers.

As mentioned above, Easter Seals already has excellent partnerships with BVR, DETR, DRC, BSB, and Mental Health as a pool from which dislocated workers can be referred to our services. Easter Seals also has established relationships with other local businesses that provide work opportunities to individuals in our warehouse setting, such as Berry Plastics and Caesar’s Palace. Individuals are trained on and paid for completed specific warehouse related tasks for these large companies, such as assembly, packaging and forklift operation.

#### *Conclusion*

With a 10.4% unemployment rate in Nevada, the highest in two decades, higher than the 8.9% national average, Easter Seals is positioned to be instrumental in skills training and job placement to address the needs of both dislocated workers and Nevada’s economy.

U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan who have returned to civilian life face an unemployment rate three (3) times the national average—with 1 in every 5 returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom service members expressing indicators for posttraumatic stress disorder and 1 in every 5 had some level of traumatic brain injury. For those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, research has shown that over half of the current caseload today can be assumed to have learning disabilities, mental retardation, psychiatric or addictive disorders, or a combination thereof.

We strongly advocate for system wide supports to be in place that address these core issues for clients and wrap them with the supports and services they need to be successful. For us, the link between poverty, unemployment, unsuccessful job placements, and hidden disabilities is clear and compelling. We are uniquely positioned to respond to the needs of the vast number of dislocated workers that have such hidden disabilities as listed above, which are at the root of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness.

Easter Seals workforce development services provide an individualized approach to assisting dislocated workers to make informed choices and attain their employment aspirations. Easter Seals’ approach includes an array of services and supports that ultimately lead to employment. This approach is designed to identify goals, objectives, and planning needs, and providing the supports a person needs to achieve and maintain employment.

Rehabilitation services have greatly improved since the Rehab Act was first passed into law in 1973. However, there continue to be significant challenges of access to employment as I have outline and as we move into the future, these challenges will become greater especially in the areas of technology and mobility. With more and more reliance on technology and increasing mobility between jobs and the complete changing of the traditional work place, we will need to emphasize uni-



versal design for services, long-term supports, assistive technology and transition services in order to prepare those of us with disabilities for the future.

[Additional submissions of Mr. Patchett follow:]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organization Name: Crossroads Rehabilitation Center, Inc.

*d.b.a. Easter Seals Crossroads Rehabilitation Center*

Overview of proposal:

In response to the June 2, 2003 request for proposal from Career Choices, Incorporated:

Easter Seals Crossroads Rehabilitation Center proposes to provide adaptive equipment and software that will increase the accessibility of WorkOne Evansville and the five WorkOne Express Sites, for the disabled in the five county Workforce Services Area. This equipment and services correspond to Phases Two and Three of this project. Phase One has been completed and Easter Seals Crossroads proposed to provide services under both Phase Two and Phase Three.

Based on a 3 year history of partnering with Marion County (Indianapolis) Indiana agencies, Easter Seals Crossroads Rehabilitation Center (Easter Seals Crossroads) has developed X-tations (accessible workstations) that address the needs of individuals with disabilities as they utilize the services of WorkOne facilities. These workstations include adaptive hardware and software, a comprehensive training program for WorkOne staff and on-going technical support. In working with the Department of Workforce Development, Easter Seals Crossroads has exclusively developed specialized software that allows the assistive technology included with the X-tation to be compatible with Indiana's CS3 system.

In response to the needs set forth in the request for proposals, Easter Seals Crossroads proposes that two X-tations be implemented in the Evansville WorkOne center and one X-tation be implemented in each of the five WorkOne express sites.

A comprehensive training program (including custom training manuals and quick reference guides) will be implemented so that the staff in the WorkOne centers are able to appropriately utilize the X-tations to serve the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Easter Seals Crossroads is looking forward to an opportunity to build on the success of the Marion County WorkOne project in implementing accessible technology in Southwestern Indiana.

*Applicant organization*

Mission: Easter Seals Crossroads is a community resource working with children and adults with disabilities and special needs and their families to promote growth, dignity and independence.

*Agency and Department*

Easter Seals Crossroads Rehabilitation Center, a not-for-profit organization, has been serving individuals with disabilities in Indiana for over 65 years. The Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center was founded in 1988 with the specific purpose of utilizing computer-based technology to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving their vocational goals. Since its inception, this program has grown to provide job accommodation, adaptive computer access, ergonomic consultation and other rehabilitation technology services to individuals with all types of disabilities throughout the state of Indiana.

The Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center is the only CARF-accredited assistive technology program in the state on Indiana. All work performed by the center is supervised by a RESNA-certified Assistive Technology Practitioner (ATP).

Recently, the Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center opened its doors to the west coast by establishing two technology centers in Las Vegas, Nevada.

*References*

Please find letters of recommendation attached from the following entities:

- Indianapolis Private Industry Council (Attachment one)
- Indiana Department of Work Force Development (Attachment two)
- Disability Resource Specialists from the Indianapolis WorkOne centers (Attachment three)
- Mayor of Indianapolis, Office of Disability Services (Attachment four)

*Statement of Need*

In order to adequately address the needs of individuals with disabilities as the utilize the WorkOne centers, specialized technology must be implemented. The technology proposed (X-tation) has been designed specifically for this purpose.

Easter Seals Crossroads proposes that two X-tation workstations be implemented at the WorkOne center in Evansville. One X-tation should be implemented at each of the WorkOne express sites in Posey County, Warrick County, Spencer County and Perry County.

Hardware and software:

(Please see Time Line section below for a schedule of equipment procurement, delivery and setup.)

Through experience in working with the Indianapolis WorkOne centers, a great deal of experience has been obtained. Based on this experience, a set of hardware and software has been developed and tested to ensure that the adaptive technology needs of most individuals accessing a WorkOne center will be met.

It is recommended that X-tations be implemented at the WorkOne center as well as at the express sites.

The X-tation includes the following technology designed to meet the needs of individuals with the following disabilities:

Low Vision:

- Screen Magnification Software (MAGic)
- MAGic has been developed by Freedom Scientific, the leading manufacturer of technology to assist individuals with vision impairment. This application provides varying levels of screen magnification, cursor enhancements and color inversion to meet the needs of individuals with a wide variety of vision impairment.
- This software has been developed to be compatible with other Freedom Scientific products, which are recommended in this report.

- Large Screen Monitor:

- During the bidders meeting on 6-10-03, it was indicated that computers and 19" monitors are being furnished by another vendor. Easter Seals Crossroads Rehabilitation Center will not furnish computer systems or monitors as part of this project.
- Large print keyboard labels:

- The X-tation is equipped with a standard keyboard with large print labels. For those with declining vision, it is often difficult to decipher some keys on the keyboard. This system of labels alleviates the difficulty with those tasks.
- Video Magnifier (CCTV)

- The X-tation includes a color video magnifier which is supported by a wheeled stand. This color magnifier can be moved toward and away from the workstation and allows users with limited vision the ability to read and write on employment-related materials while using the X-tation.
- Compatibility with CS3:

- These items have been tested with the CS3 system, are in use in the Indianapolis WorkOne centers, and are compatible.

Blind:

- Screen Reading Software (JAWS):

- JAWS has also been developed by Freedom Scientific, the leading manufacturer of technology to assist individuals who are completely blind. This application "reads" the information on the computer's screen (via speakers or headphones). This software is highly adjustable to ensure that the user is able to listen to information at the rate and tone of their choosing.
- The staff of the Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center has developed specialized computer software to allow the user to operate the CS3 system with JAWS. This software includes user keystrokes specifically for CS3 functions, as well as a custom help system designed to allow the user to understand better each screen within CS3 and how it applies to the user's activities. This custom software is included in our proposal at no additional charge.

- Document Scanning system (Openbook):

- Openbook has also been developed by Freedom Scientific, the leading manufacturer of technology to assist individuals who are completely blind. This document scanning and reading system works with the X-tation's document scanner to scan printed materials into the station and "read" them aloud to the user via speakers or a headset. This system provides adjustable fonts, rates of reading, and compatibility with the other components of the X-tation.
- Compatibility with CS3:

- These items have been tested with the CS3 system are in use in the Indianapolis WorkOne centers, and are compatible.

Physical:



Traditionally, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have minimal adaptive technology needs as it pertains to computer access. The following items are included in the X-tation to address those needs:

- Sound Sentry:
  - This software is integral to the Windows operating system and generates a visual indicator when the computer makes an audible sound.
- Show Sounds:
  - This software allows the display of captions of applications that are designed to include captions.
- TTY:
  - The X-tation includes a basic TTY unit to allow the placement and reception of TTY calls.

Learning:

The X-tation includes a variety of systems to enhance access by individuals with learning disabilities:

- Voice Input (Dragon Naturally Speaking)
  - Dragon Naturally Speaking is a voice input system that allows users with learning or reading difficulties to input information into a computer system. This system utilizes a headset microphone that allows the user to speak information, which is converted to text within computer applications. This functionality has proven to reduce misspelled words and increase a learning disabled user's capacity to read and generate written documents.
- Document scanning reading/literacy software (WYNN):
  - WYNN (What You Need Now) has been developed by Freedom Scientific's Learning Systems Group. This system provides the user alternative access to materials in any of the following formats: Web-based, Computer-based (Word or text documents) or scanned printed materials.
  - WYNN provides multimodal feedback in the following formats:
    - speech output
    - color-coded reading
    - various font sizes, types and spacing
  - Additionally, WYNN allows the user to create bookmarks and notes in either voice or written format.
- Compatibility with CS3:
  - These items have been tested with the CS3 system, are in use in the Indianapolis WorkOne centers, and are compatible.

Staff Training:

Training is a critical component of any assistive technology solution. In terms of the WorkOne centers, this is especially true. Many end-users come to the center with existing assistive technology experience. Others have not had the opportunity to utilize this type of assistance. In either situation, it is critical that the staff of the WorkOne centers be familiar with the assistive technology and able to provide end-users basic instruction in its use.

Type of training:

Training will be provided by two experienced trainers in the following manners:

1. Lecture style training:

In order to ensure that staff have knowledge of various disability types and how those disabilities affect access to the Work One's computer systems, an overview of the disability types (above) will be covered. Additionally, lecture-style instruction will be provided regarding each of the adaptive technologies included in the X-tation.

2. Hands-on practice:

Immediately following the lecture-style portion of the training, staff will have an opportunity to put their knowledge into practice by participating in a series of exercises designed to increase practical knowledge of workstation utilization. These exercises will include practice on tasks specifically related to the CS3 system as well as role-playing exercises designed to increase empathy toward end-users with disabilities.

Location of Training:

Training will be conducted at the WorkOne center in Evansville and each of the express sites. Experience has dictated that the working environment is the best training environment. Our trainers have experience in working with staff to overcome the distractions that will occur.

Levels of Training:

Three specific groups of staff have been identified:

Level One:

The most intensive training will be provided to those who work with the X-tation on a day-to-day basis. Individuals in this group will be trained on basic, inter-

mediate and some advanced aspects of the technology included in the X-tation. Additionally, this group will be trained in adjusting the workstation to meet the needs of a variety of individuals with disabilities as well as how to provide rudimentary training to those end users who might not have experience with assistive technology. This group also will be trained to perform level three training so that new staff can be trained without the expense of additional training from the Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center.

Level Two:

The next most intensive training will be provided to those who provide relief to the first group. This group will be provided training similar to that of the first group. This training will be slightly less detailed and will focus on the basic operation of the assistive technology available.

Level Three:

Lastly, it is important that everyone in the WorkOne center have a basic understanding of the X-tation. A brief overview or "top ten" training program will be provided to these individuals. Training will include awareness of the technology available and basic understanding of its use.

Training materials:

Training materials will be provided in two forms:

1. Manufacturer's documentation: Each component of the X-tation comes with manufacturer's documentation. This documentation is typically brief and includes basic operations of each component.

2. Custom documentation: Many components of the workstation are compatible with the CS3 system; however, special keystrokes or customization may have been developed to ensure compatibility. Custom manuals have been developed for these situations and will be provided.

3. Quick reference guides: Each component's basic functionality has been described in terms of its functionality for persons with different types of disabilities. This full-color guide includes photographs that will assist the most novice user in utilizing various components of the X-tation.

4. Accessible formats: All training materials and quick reference guides will be provided in both paper format and accessible CD-ROMs.

Training for new staff:

Individuals trained at Level One will be able to provide training to new staff who will function at Level Three. Additional training can also be purchased should the need arise.

Training evaluation:

WorkOne staff will be subjected to a brief test prior to training and following training. This test will consist of questions designed to identify knowledge of working with individuals and assistive technology. The pre and post-test results will be compared and presented during the administrative wrap up meeting.

Set up and installation:

Two teams of installers will utilize cargo vans to deliver and install X-tations at each of the locations specified in the Request For Proposals. These teams will deliver and assemble X-tations at a rate of one workstation per day at each location. The time allotted for installation and set up are appropriate and can easily be met.

Set up, installation and training will be coordinated in such a way that the Information Resource Areas will be available to the public at all times.

Follow up assistance:

Regular follow up visits:

Follow up assistance will be readily available to the WorkOne centers. Up to three visits to each WorkOne center per year will be provided for the purposes of support, training and maintenance. (Should more than three visits per year be required, on-site support is available at standard rates. Should one site require more support than other sites, unused visits may be shared among sites, per approval of the WorkOne Director.)

Technical support line:

The Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center has established a 24-hour 7 day-per-week help line available to our clients. This system allows the staff of the WorkOne centers to leave a message at any time and receive a return phone call. The target response time is within one hour of the call being received. In the event that problems cannot be resolved with a telephone call, an on-site visit (up to three per year) will be made within two working days.

Measures implemented to reduce support needs:

The X-tation utilizes technology that is specifically designed to ensure compatibility among components. This utilization has been found to drastically reduce the amount of support required.

Evaluation process:

Following the delivery and setup process, a brief questionnaire will be provided to the managers of each WorkOne center. This questionnaire will solicit feedback regarding the setup and delivery process. Results of this questionnaire will be presented during the administrative wrap up meeting.

#### *Demonstrated Organizational Experience*

In 2000, the Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center partnered with the Indiana Private Industry Council, Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation to make the WorkOne Centers in Indianapolis more accessible. This project involved all aspects of accessibility, including overcoming physical barriers in the WorkOne facilities, attitudinal barriers of staff and technology barriers. With regard to technology, four X-tation (accessible workstations) were implemented, staff were provided training based on their role and need to utilize the workstation, specialized software was developed to allow the X-tations to be compatible with the CS3 system, and a set of customized training manuals/quick reference guides was developed to instruct end-users and staff in techniques for utilizing adaptive computer equipment with the WorkOne's software.

#### *Budget Narrative / Justification*

The Statement of Need (above) clearly details the need and utilization of equipment and services proposed.

Please refer to attachments five, six and seven, which provide detailed costs associated with each phase of this project.

#### *Time Line and Management*

##### Management of project:

Easter Seals Crossroads' involvement in this project will be managed by Wade Wingler, Manager of the Ruth Lilly Assistive Technology Center. Mr. Wingler will coordinate all equipment and service delivery through the Executive Director of the WorkOne Center or her delegates. WorkOne Management will be responsible to coordinate scheduling of the following activities among the WorkOne Express sites.

#### TIME LINE

[The following is the target time line for delivery of services and equipment]

##### PHASE TWO

(planning, procurement, delivery and setup)

##### Planning

July 31, 2003	Planning and introductions at Evansville, Posey & Warrick
August 1, 2003	Planning and introductions at Vanderberg, Spencer & Perry

##### Equipment procurement

August 4, 2003	Equipment ordered from suppliers
August 25, 2003	All equipment received at Easter Seals Crossroads

##### Delivery and setup

September 1, 2003	Delivery/setup teams (2) assemble, load and travel to Southwestern Indiana
September 2, 2003	Evansville WorkOne setup (both teams)
September 3, 2003	Posey & Warrick County setup (one team per location)
September 4, 2003	Vanderberg & Spencer County setup (one team per location)
September 5, 2003	Perry County setup and teams return to Indianapolis (both teams)

##### PHASE THREE

(training)

September 8, 9 & 10, 2003	Evansville Level one & two training (trainer 1)
September 8, 9 & 10, 2003	Vanderberg Level one & two training (trainer 2)
September 10,11 & 12, 2003	Posey Level one & two training (trainer 1)
September 10,11 & 12, 2003	Warrick Level one & two training (trainer 2)
September 15,16 & 17, 2003	Spencer Level one & two training (trainer 1)
September 15,16 & 17, 2003	Perry Level one & two training (trainer 2)
September 22, 2003	Evansville & Vanderburg Level three training (trainer 1)
September 23, 2003	Posey & Warrick Level three training (trainer 1)

## TIME LINE—Continued

[The following is the target time line for delivery of services and equipment]

September 24, 2003	Spencer & Perry Level three training (trainer 2)
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE WRAP UP</b>	
September 30, 2003	Administrative wrap up meeting in Evansville and project completion

**Easter Seals Southern Nevada—Investing in Workforce Capacity**

For more than 85 years, Easter Seals has offered help and hope to children and adults living with disabilities and to the families that love them, nationwide. Over the past 25 years, Easter Seals Southern Nevada has been providing critical services that impact the lives of individuals and families and strengthen our entire community. Our strong record of high quality services, experienced staff, fiscal responsibility and use of best practices makes us uniquely positioned to partner with State and local agencies to leverage the Stimulus Package in Nevada.

Our mission—To create solutions that help people with disabilities become self-sufficient through education, community partnerships and direct services.

The goals of Easter Seals Southern Nevada are:

- Full employment for persons with disabilities
- Absolute independence for persons with disabilities
- Community participation for persons with disabilities

To ensure that people can get back to work, be successful in a job or living independently, and support their family during this economic downturn, we are able to provide a wide range of services as listed, below.

**Employment and Rehabilitation:** Provides an opportunity for participants to learn new skills to successfully enter the workforce or return to work after an illness or injury and earn wages at the same time. Easter Seals often accepts individuals that have not been able to work in other environments and we succeed in helping them achieve their employment goals. This program currently assists over 100 people in these critical areas and could serve an additional 50 over the next 3 months by hiring and training 6 new staff members, for a total of 56 paid positions added to our community.

**Adult Day Services:** Gives adults with severe/profound disabilities the opportunity to participate in center based activities that promote independence with daily living skills, social interaction with peers and physical fitness. Caregivers for these participants are able to continue working, secure in the knowledge that their loved one is receiving optimal care in a safe and stimulating environment, which adds to the economy and helps reduce unemployment rates. Over 40 individuals currently participate in this program. If funding was readily available, this program could provide services for an additional 15 individuals, within the next two months, by hiring and training 5 new staff.

**Supported Living Assistance:** Provides guidance and training to individuals with developmental delays and mental illness. These services are designed to enable these individuals to live as independently as possible in the community. The more individuals that are able to live independently, the less of a burden on the State to provide for them and less stress on the family members who care for them. This enables family members to maintain employment and also allows the individuals in the program to have the pride of living on their own and once they feel secure in their housing, it is much easier for them to find and maintain employment as well.

There are currently over 70 individuals receiving supported living services and an additional 20 individuals could be served, within the next three months, by hiring and training 4 new staff.

**Assistive technology services:** Provides person centered services that empower children and adult with disabilities to create positive change and increase independence and productivity using appropriate assistive technology. Services include evaluation, training, troubleshooting and customized solution development. All of these services lead to a more independent life and the ability to begin working, maintain employment or go back to work after an illness or injury. With increased funding, a minimum of 85 additional individuals could be served through the services listed above, in a one on one or classroom setting, which would ready them for employment or help them to maintain their current employment. Three staff positions would be added within a two month period to serve this increased caseload, for a total of 88 people potentially employed with these resources.

Child Development Center: The Easter Seals—Wonders of Our World Child Development Center is designed for families with children of all abilities from 6 weeks to 8 years. Our inclusive environment promotes diversity that builds acceptance and positive attitudes toward others. All parents struggle with finding quality, safe, affordable child care but this issue is magnified for parents of children with special needs because there are so few options available. If funding were readily available, our center could accommodate 45 additional children within a two month period, by hiring and training 4 new staff. This would enhance the local workforce, not only by adding positions within our agency, but all of the parents who would be able to find and maintain employment. Our Center Director is also qualified to provide training to families or other providers on a variety of child related topics, including promoting inclusion within other centers statewide.

Early intervention services: Works with children with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions affecting development from birth to three. This home based, parent driven program focuses on the family's goals for their child by providing developmental services as well as therapies, nutrition, parent training and playgroups. As funding has become scarce for this program, the waiting list is growing. Easter Seals could serve an additional 100 children, doubling our current capacity, within three months by hiring and training 4 new staff. As with our other children's services, this program assists children reach their potential and increases the chances for a less restrictive entry into education and other programs which saves the taxpayers and, ultimately, an increased chance of entering the work force as adults.

Recreation/Camping: Provides camping and recreation activities for children of all abilities, ages 8 to 18. Activities are scheduled throughout the year allowing children to interact with their peers and engage in adventures that they might not normally have a chance to explore while promoting physical activity. With funding readily available to scholarship children with special needs that cannot afford camp, an additional 50 children could participate in camping/recreation experiences throughout the year, by hiring 4 contract staff.

Autism services: Provides one on one applied behavior analysis to children with autism, ages 18 months to 8 years of age, in their own home. This program not only works with the child, but with the entire family to develop strategies for success that family members can carry out every day. Funding for autism services is sorely lacking in Nevada, and therefore, many families are looking to move out of state to find the services their child needs. Increasing funding will allow more children to be served, more parent training, and more residents staying in Nevada. Ultimately a child's success with these interventions can mean less restrictive environments in school resulting in lower cost to taxpayers and higher probability of employment when they become adults. This program is very time intensive so even a relatively small number of children receive a great many hours of service. Therefore, with funding readily available, an additional 12 children could be added to this program for approximately 400 additional hours per month, by hiring and training 4 new staff within the next 3 months.

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Chairman HINOJOSA. And with that, I call on Mr. Brooks.

**STATEMENT OF CHRIS BROOKS, DIRECTOR, BOMBARD  
RENEWABLE ENERGY**

Mr. BROOKS. Chairman, thank you. Congresswoman Titus, thank you.

I was born here in the State of Nevada and I'm a third generation electrical worker and about a decade ago I started a renewable energy business where together with my current employer, Bombard Electric, we've installed over 20 megawatts of renewable energy in this state. And on 500, over 500 projects, employing hundreds of Nevada electrical workers and other tradesmen for thousands and thousands of man-hours.

I am and my family is, all my employees are all members of the IBEW, the electrical union, and we were all trained by that electrical union. I helped create the renewable energy training curriculum for the Joint Apprenticeship Training Center here in Las Vegas, and I also worked on the National Apprenticeship Training



Center in their renewable energy curriculum development team and we provide certification and training for electricians.

The renewable energy industry began in American laboratories with American scientists developing innovative solutions to the energy challenges. Over the past few decades the industry has grown from a niche market to one of the fastest growing industries in the world.

From utility sized installations down to residential systems, renewable energy emerges as an enormous industry capable of providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in states like Nevada. Governments at all levels, understanding the potential for job and fiscal growth, have begun introducing policies to support the implementation of this now viable energy solution.

For renewable energy to meet America's growing energy demands, we must continue to develop our most valuable renewable resource, the American workforce.

We must train tomorrow's renewable energy workforce today. These green jobs, for the most part, are construction jobs. To train green workers, we need to train construction workers, and build on their already existing knowledge base.

Renewable energy technologies require the same high standards for safety and reliability as existing energy technology installations, construction projects, and any other types of construction related processes. Many of the building trades training programs require these high standards already and are well aligned with the green jobs goals of the Workforce Investment Act.

The IBEW has led the way in the training and providing of a highly skilled workforce for the safe installation of the latest electrical technologies, dating back to its inception over a century ago in 1891.

The IBEW and NECA have been instrumental in establishing national standards to maintain the highest level of workmanship and safety in these installations. These high standards continue as the IBEW and the JATC establish renewable energy training programs.

Southern Nevada JATC has been providing training since 1947. The JATC is a non-profit member of the community focused on providing long-term employment for individuals seeking a career, not just a job, in the electrical construction industry and in renewable energy.

The JATC understands the benefits of career-oriented training and placement, for both individuals and the communities that they are working in. In its long history in southern Nevada, the JATC has trained thousands of electricians, including my grandfather, my father, my brothers and myself.

Last week in Southern Nevada we turned out 93 electricians through that training program, in electrical theory, construction practices, safety, and during the course of the program, the five-year program that every apprentice went through, they received training in renewable energy systems.

The Southern Nevada campus of JATC also has a state of the art wind and PV training facility that teaches about installation of these projects. These programs, all these programs that we've talked about to get these certifications already exist, are well

aligned with the Workforce Investment Act, but are self-funded. Right now all of the electrical workers dispatched by the IBEW pay for these programs with portions of their own paychecks.

There are many existing programs, like apprenticeships, that the JATC is currently working with. The Build Nevada Initiative, for instance, focuses on providing high school students a gateway into the trade schools and apprenticeship programs by giving the math skills and construction skills that will—or jobs skills that will then help them get into the apprenticeship programs right out of high school.

Apprenticeship programs all over the country, like the JATC and several other building trades, hire American veterans through programs such as Helmets to Hardhats where they are taking former military personnel and putting them right into construction training apprenticeship programs.

Educational outreach is essential in this. The apprenticeship programs in companies like ours, we reach out to all the schools, local schools, trade schools, job fairs, and offer employment opportunities through the apprenticeship programs to the students in the high schools.

Because of the tremendous leadership of many Nevadans, some of them here and some of them in Washington, D. C. right now, and some up in Carson still, we have many things like Senator Horsford's Green Jobs act that are well aligned with the current goals of the Workforce Investment Act.

The problem that we have is the recurring costs of training provided by JATC of Southern Nevada and many building trades facilities are self-funded. They are funded by the contractors and they are funded by our workers that they are training. As a result of the economic downturn, and the loss of jobs, we are losing funding at the same time.

If we don't have men out there working, men and women in the field, they can't contribute to these training programs. The trainers are also usually workers in the field themselves. So these building trades programs and the facilities they use, the trainers that work there, the workforce they trained already exist, are well aligned and direct funding of these programs would be very helpful to furthering our goals.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you, Mr. Brooks.

Again, I want to say that your statement in its entirety will be made part of this record.

[The statement of Mr. Brooks follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Chris Brooks, Director, Bombard Renewable Energy**

I was born and raised in Nevada. I am a third generation electrician and helped establish the current Renewable Energy industry in the state. I was a small business owner who saw the potential for Renewable Energy in Nevada nearly a decade ago. My father, brothers, and I, all trained electricians, work in the Renewable Energy industry today as green job pioneers.

After working as an electrician in the construction and utility sectors in Nevada for many years I started a solar electric contracting company in 2000. In 2004 I joined forces with Bombard Electric, creating their Renewable Energy Division, as a response to an increase in demand and interest in the Renewable Energy industry. Together we have installed over 20 megawatts of Renewable Energy on over 500 projects in and around the State of Nevada.

I helped create and develop the Renewable Energy training program and curriculum for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) / National

Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) / Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Center of Southern Nevada (JATC). In addition to my local efforts I am on the Renewable Energy Curriculum Development Committee for the National JATC. I was among the earliest solar professionals to obtain certification from the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP). In 2007 I was appointed to the Nevada Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Task Force. In 2008 I was appointed to Senator Harry Reid's Blue Ribbon Task Force for a Clean Energy Future. I was a founding member of, and current board member of, the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) Southern Nevada Chapter, SolarNV.

The Renewable Energy industry began in American laboratories with American scientists developing innovative solutions to meet energy challenges. Over the past few decades the industry has grown from a niche market to one of the fastest growing industries in the world.

From utility sized installations down to residential systems, Renewable Energy has emerged as an enormous industry capable of providing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars to states like Nevada. Governments at all levels, understanding this potential for job and fiscal growth, have begun introducing policy to support the implementation of this now viable energy solution. For Renewable Energy to meet America's growing energy demands we must continue to develop our most valuable renewable resource, the American workforce.

We must train tomorrow's Renewable Energy workforce today. These Green Jobs are construction jobs. To train green workers we need to train construction workers, and build on their already existing knowledge base. Renewable Energy technologies require the same high standards for safety and reliability as existing energy technology installations, construction projects, and any other construction related process. Many of the building trades training programs require these high standards already and are well aligned with the Green Job goals of The Workforce Investment Act.

The IBEW has led the way in the training and providing of a highly skilled workforce for the safe installation of the latest in electrical technology, dating back to its inception, over a century ago, in 1891. The IBEW and NECA have been instrumental in establishing national standards to maintain the highest level of workmanship and safety in its installations. These high standards have continued as the IBEW and the JATC established Renewable Energy training programs.

The Southern Nevada JATC has been providing training since 1947. The JATC is a non-profit member of the community focused on providing long-term employment for individuals seeking a career in the electrical construction industry, including Renewable Energy. The JATC understands the benefits of career oriented training and placement, for both the individuals and the communities they are working in. In its long history in Southern Nevada the JATC has trained thousands of electricians including my grandfather, my father, my brothers, and myself.

Last week in Southern Nevada the JATC graduated 93 electricians from the five year apprenticeship program. This program's curriculum focuses on electrical theory, construction practices, and safety. During the course of the program every apprentice is taught the theory behind, and the methods of installation for, Renewable Energy systems.

The Southern Nevada campus of the JATC also has a state of the art Wind and PV Training Laboratory. This lab offers hands on training on four different existing solar arrays, multiple types of inverters, and fully functional wind turbine. All this equipment, in addition to measurement and verification hardware, is routed to a comprehensive data acquisition system. All the data that is collected is available online as an educational resource to the public.

In addition to the apprenticeship training on Renewable Energy and the Wind and PV Training Lab, the JATC also offers a 50 hour comprehensive training module, concentrated on safe and effective installation of photovoltaic (PV) systems. This class prepares the already certified electricians for the Nevada State PV Installer's License exam, administered by the Nevada State OSHA Department. Several hundred apprentices and electricians have successfully completed this course and exam in order to meet the state's requirements for installing wind and PV technology.

These programs already exist, are well aligned with The Workforce Investment Act goals for Green Jobs, but are self-funded. All of the electrical workers dispatched by the IBEW pay for these programs with portions of their paychecks.

There are many existing programs that apprenticeships like the JATC are currently working with. The Build Nevada Initiative focuses on providing high school students a gateway in to trade schools and apprenticeship programs. Students enrolled in the program obtain math skills that exceed the requirements for entry in to all apprenticeship programs, including the Renewable Energy programs offered by the JATC. Build Nevada partners with the Clark County School District to teach

the future workforce occupational skills at facilities such as Desert Rose High School and the Area Technical Trade Center. The Build Nevada Initiative also ensures that the future workforce is properly trained in construction equipment operation and jobsite safety before they enter their respective apprenticeship program.

Apprenticeship programs all over the country, including the JATC of Southern Nevada, are working with America's veterans through programs such as Helmets to Hardhats. Helmets to Hardhats is a non-profit organization that connects former military personnel with career opportunities from the nationwide building and construction trades.

Educational outreach is an essential part of developing a Renewable Energy workforce. The Renewable Energy Division of Bombard Electric regularly attends elementary school energy fairs, donates time and materials to school science projects, and sponsors Renewable Energy competitions at area schools. Our company, together with the JATC apprenticeship program, also provides resources on careers in Renewable Energy at vocational high schools and technical academies.

Because of the tremendous leadership demonstrated by many Nevadans, including State Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, United States Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and NV Energy, there are several new and existing programs that are well aligned with the Green Jobs goals of the Workforce Investment Act. Senator Horsford's proposed SB152 would utilize existing apprenticeship training programs and non-profit workforce development groups to leverage federal funds for Green Jobs. All installers at the Renewable Energy Division of Bombard Electric were trained by JATC instructors, whose education would not have been possible without the hard work of Senator Reid. The JATC Wind and PV Training Laboratory was funded largely by NV Energy through the Renewable Generations program and a pilot and demonstration program authorized by the Nevada State Legislature.

The reoccurring costs of training provided by the JATC of Southern Nevada are funded by the electrical workers of the IBEW and the contractors of NECA. These training programs continue to provide the most comprehensive training on the latest energy technology, including Renewable Energy. As a result of the economic downturn a growing portion of the workforce responsible for funding the training programs is unemployed and cannot contribute. This month alone Bombard Electric has spent over \$10,000 in Renewable Energy training for its workforce.

Growing unemployment means less funding for a program that is currently at maximum capacity. The existing classroom facilities for the JATC training programs are in need of expansion and modernization. All this at a time when Renewable Energy training is most needed.

The trainers in the JATC programs are largely workers themselves who have to train the future Renewable Energy workforce in addition to their full time jobs. These trainers receive less compensation when training than if they were on the job. The apprentices and journeymen electrical workers receive all their training after hours and on weekends with no compensation whatsoever. In addition they also pay for all of their textbooks and materials, even when unemployed.

These building trades training programs, the facilities they use, the trainers who work there, and the workforce they train already exist and are well aligned with the Workforce Investment Act goals for Green Jobs. Direct funding of these programs, and others like them around the state and country, are necessary for the growth and development of a Renewable Energy workforce. Bombard Electric, and contractors like them all over the country, need help to best prepare their workforce for our Renewable Energy future. With the guidance and support of the Workforce Investment Act our common goals of putting Nevadans and Americans back to work can be realized safely and soon.

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Chairman HINOJOSA. I now call on Mrs. Cook.

**STATEMENT OF CHANDA COOK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES, NEVADA PUBLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

Ms. COOK. Thank you. Good morning. My name is Chandra Cook and I'm here today representing the Nevada—

Chairman HINOJOSA. Will you speak a little bit closer to the microphone? I want to be sure that everybody hears you clearly.

Ms. COOK. Thank you.

As you know, America's dropout crisis has continued to receive significant attention nationally. I commend you, Chairman Hino-

josa and Chairman of the Full House Education and Labor Committee, George Miller, for your long-standing leadership on behalf of all of American youth, as well as our newest representative to Congress, Congresswoman Titus, who has been a leader and an advocate for issues that affect Nevadans and our youth.

The scope of this problem and its impact in Nevada is staggering. Approximately 20 percent, or 43,000 Nevada youth, have not progressed beyond high school diploma and are neither employed, nor enrolled in secondary—in post-secondary education.

Nevada ranks worst among all 50 states in the percentage of teens who are not attending school and who are not working. These individuals have little chance to ever learn a family-supporting wage and many of them have been dependent upon public systems, rather than becoming contributing members of society.

Beyond the individual impact, the economic and social consequences for Nevada are great. For example, the high school dropouts from 2008, if they had graduated, Nevada's economy would have seen an additional \$5.1 billion in wages.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Nevada Public Education Foundation which works for systemic change by bringing together the education, workforce development and youth development systems to our Ready For Life movement.

While Congress looks at the youth provisions of the Workforce Investment Act, or WIA, it should ask a series of broader questions about how to advance a comprehensive youth strategy that includes WIA as one of the federal policy vehicles for improving the education and career pathways for America's most vulnerable youth.

Our legislative recommendations are captured in the following areas: Governance, eligibility services and performance, quality improvement, and innovation. To be most effective, WIA youth programs and activities should be part of a larger regional strategy connecting workforce, education and youth development activities, as opposed to working in isolation.

This should include increased flexibility, regional integration, funding local priorities and investing in expansion of local capacities through intermediate areas and collaborative system approaches.

Current eligibility and performance provisions are obstacles to serving many of the youth that are most at need. Eligibility determination must be simplified and streamlined, and I recommend the eligibility goes to age 24, which was done in March, and research has shown that we need to connect our youth by the time they are 25, or basically we've lost them forever.

Ideally, determining eligibility for WIA should be based on risk factors. If income requirements are maintained, permit youth who are eligible for other federal means-tested programs to be automatically eligible for WIA services.

Under the current performance measurement system providers often serve primarily those who are most job ready, thus reaching a smaller portion of the population that need services. Older disconnected youth, especially those with low skill levels present a special challenge. Congress should adopt measures to mark the progress of all eligible youth, particularly those who are hard to

employ for those skills. This will require different performance measures for different segments of the population.

Funding for youth activities is diffused, limiting the impact of federal efforts to raise workforce-imposed secondary readiness. To improve impact we recommend that Congress should place a priority on off-track students, including prevention and credit retrieval efforts to get them back on track for graduation, and to attaining post-secondary credentials.

We recommend that we should link WIA in-school activities reviewed with other relevant federal programs and place a priority on funding partnerships among community organizations, colleges, K-12, employers, philanthropy as appropriate. More details and specific recommendations are in my written testimony.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify. As you know, in today's economy it is imperative that the revised legislation be even more strategic, youth collaborative, targeted and deliberate activities promoting educational engagement and work skill development. The Workforce Investment Act can help our youth graduate from high school and gain appropriate post-secondary education or training to become productive members of our society.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Cook follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Chanda Cook, Director of Community Initiatives,  
Nevada Public Education Foundation**

America's dropout crisis has continued to receive significant attention nationally. This is the result of better data about the significant number of students not graduating on-time—only 70% nationally on average, with some schools graduating fewer than 50% of their students. Recent research has also underscored the serious social and economic impact on communities through the country.

The scope of the problem and its economic impact on Nevada is staggering. Consider the following statistics:

- Nevada's graduation rate was 67.4% for 2007-08
- 20% or approximately 43,000 Nevada youth ages 18-24 are disconnected (have not progressed beyond a high school diploma and are neither employed nor enrolled in postsecondary education)

Nevada ranks worst among all 50 states in the percentage of:

- Teens who are high school dropouts
- Teens not attending school and not working
- Young adults enrolled in or completed college

For the individuals represented by these numbers, their chances to ever be able to earn a family-supporting wage are slim, and research tells us many of them will be dependent on public systems rather than becoming contributors to the public good. Beyond the individual impact, the economic and social consequences for Nevada are grave:

- If the more than 19,500 high school dropouts from 2008 had earned their diplomas, Nevada's economy would have seen an additional \$5.1 billion in wages over these students' lifetimes.
- If Hispanics/Latinos, African-Americans, and Native Americans achieved the same education levels as Whites by 2020, Nevada's personal income would increase by \$2.2 billion.
- More than 80% of America's prison population consists of dropouts. It costs approximately SIX TIMES MORE annually to incarcerate than educate an individual.

In an effort to address these staggering numbers and resulting issues, Nevada Public Education Foundation created the Ready for Life movement to bring together youth-serving systems in a collaborative effort to ensure more Nevada youth are "ready for life."

*Nevada Public Education Foundation's Ready for Life Movement*

Established in 1991, Nevada Public Education Foundation (NPEF) is a statewide non-profit intermediary organization working for systemic change on behalf of Nevada youth. Facilitating collaboration among public and private youth-serving orga-

nizations, NPEF brings together the education, workforce development, and youth development systems in order to better serve youth, particularly those most at risk of not graduating from high school and transitioning to productive adulthood. NPEF builds this connected infrastructure through its Ready for Life movement.

NPEF launched Ready for Life in 2005 as a collaborative effort to improve Nevada's high school graduation rate. NPEF's focus was driven by research from Stanford University indicating that young people who are not connected by age 25 to either school or work are likely to remain disconnected forever, resulting in significant personal, economic, and societal costs. This concern was solidified by local research (see [www.readyforlifenv.org](http://www.readyforlifenv.org)) showing that too many of our own students are failing to transition from high school to productive adulthood. According to the Stanford research, those most at risk of not being "connected by 25" fall into four categories: youth who do not complete high school; those deeply involved in the juvenile justice system; youth in the foster care system; and young, unmarried mothers.

Ready for Life is a statewide movement, a systemic effort to support youth; it is not a specific program or intervention, but a facilitation of collaboration among youth-serving organizations with the end goal of connecting Nevada youth to education or productive employment by age 25.

Nevada's Ready for Life movement now involves hundreds of organizations statewide, local community collaboratives, and a network of nearly 1,000 stakeholders working toward the vision that all Nevada youth are ready for life, supported by a community ethic that values education. Convened by Nevada Public Education Foundation, public and private organizations are partnering in the belief that as they work together, students will be more likely to complete high school and gain appropriate postsecondary education or training to become productive, contributing members of society. Partners include local agencies, nonprofits, community-based organizations, education entities including local school districts and higher education, faith based organizations, youth, concerned parents, and elected officials.

In November 2008, the Ready for Life Nevada Dropout Prevention Summit established the goal to increase Nevada's high school graduation rate 10% by 2013. Recognizing common goals and collaborative processes, Nevada Public Education Foundation was excited to unite the Ready for Life movement with NV DETR's federal Shared Youth Vision partnership in January 2009. With this unique blend of public, private and non-profit leadership, Nevada is now positioned to make sustainable systemic change via this collaboration, with the end goal of connecting Nevada youth to education or productive employment by age 25. Through Ready for Life in local communities and statewide, NPEF facilitates:

- Creating a connected infrastructure by aligning education, workforce development and youth development to support youth
- Public and private coordination at the local and state levels, recognizing multiple systems have roles in youth success
- Cross-communication between federal, state and local work to leverage resources, remove barriers, and learn & share promising practices
- Collaborative planning and progress toward measurable goals to help youth become "ready for life"
- Building a community ethic that values education

#### *Intermediary Organizations*

The following recommendations are submitted by NPEF and include significant input and feedback from workforce and education intermediary organizations across the country, including those in Portland, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago. Facilitated by Jobs for the Future, the Boston-based research, development and policy organization, this consortium (of which NPEF is a member) has been developing and sharing best practices for systemic change to help our nation's struggling students and disconnected youth succeed in school and transition to become productive, contributing members of society.

The work of these intermediary organizations, including NPEF's Ready for Life Nevada work since 2005, underscores the need for intermediary organizations dedicated to building the infrastructure necessary for ongoing and sustainable collaboration among youthserving systems. In order to more effectively engage youth in school and develop an educated workforce to lead our nation's economy, investment in intermediary organizations is critical for alignment of education, workforce, and youth development systems.

#### *Legislative Recommendations*

While Congress should look directly at the youth provision of the Workforce Investment Act, it must also ask a series of broader questions about how to advance a comprehensive youth strategy that include the Workforce Investment Act as one

of the federal policy vehicles for improving the education and career pathways for America's most vulnerable youth. Congress should seize this moment to align outcomes, reporting & accountability, encourage and ease the use of multiple funding streams. All these multiple federal policy vehicles, including the youth activities of the Workforce Investment Act, should ensure that all eligible youth are advancing on a clear path toward a postsecondary credential required for success in today's economy.

The legislative recommendations are captured in the following areas:

- Governance
- Eligibility, Services, and Performance
- Quality Improvement and Innovation

#### *Governance*

Current law authorized Youth Councils to provide coordination and oversight among a limited number of local stakeholders with respect to authorized youth activities. Today, Youth Councils must play a more strategic role.

With the support of local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), Youth Councils must measure the needs of local youth and ensure that school districts, WIBs, higher education partners, and other key stakeholders collaborate to provide a targeted range of options to serve them.

To be most effective, WIA youth programs and activities should be part of a larger regional strategy connecting workforce, education and youth development activities. Rather than stand-alone entities working in isolation, Youth Councils must collaborate with other youthserving systems and connect to related efforts in order to better meet the needs of local youth. As described above, intermediary organizations are highly effective conduits for this collaboration.

Congress should:

- Allow the maximum flexibility and encourage regional integration of WIA youth efforts with existing regional youth committees and/or intermediaries where appropriate, as opposed to working in isolation.
- Invest in expansion of local capacity through intermediaries and collaborations that bring together workforce, education, and youth development systems at the local, regional and/or state levels.
- Specify that representation must include an individual from the local education agency or agencies in the area responsible for secondary education; individual from at least one local institution for higher education; employers in local industries and sectors that are growing and have a high demand for skilled labor; and as appropriate local youth-related foundations and/or philanthropies.
- Establish an incentive fund for entrepreneurial WIBs and Youth Councils to adopt an expanded set of duties, including improving capacity to gather, analyze, and use data to evaluate the quality of current youth program options and increasing the supply of quality education options for in-school and out-of-school youth.
- Allow Youth Councils the discretion to direct funding toward local priorities. Such provisions should set floors on basic activities, such as in-school, out-of-school, and, as appropriate, summer jobs. A portion of funds would be directed toward highpriority purposes consistent with data analyses and investment strategies.

#### *Eligibility, Services, and Performance*

WIA should focus on serving youth that are most in need of skill development services. That means retaining services for both in-school and out-of-school youth, while placing a priority on the hardest-to-serve through targeting services, expanding eligibility, and improving performance measures. Current eligibility and performance provisions pose programmatic obstacles to serving many of the youth that are most in need.

*Eligibility*—Too much time at the local level is devoted to determining eligibility, with little positive effect and in the face of new research that offers more streamlined strategies for eligibility determination. There is a need to simplify the determination of which youth are eligible to receive services.

Congress should:

- Increase age eligibility to 24. Research shows the importance of engaging youth by age 25. Congress already recognized this by raising the age for youth employment funds in the ARRA from 21 to 24.
- Permit youth who are eligible for other federal means-tested programs to be automatically eligible for WIA services.
- Make youth automatically eligible for services based on risk factors, such as disconnected status (out of school and out of work) and early warning indicators for in-school, off-track youth (e.g. over-age, under-credited, non-attendance), preferably without income eligibility.



- If income requirements are maintained, permit the use of income proxy measures (e.g., ESEA Title I, Free and Reduced lunch status, high-poverty census tracts) as automatic designation for eligibility.

Funding—Funding for youth activities is diffused, limiting the impact of federal efforts to raise workforce and postsecondary readiness. Funds should target off-track students within the in-school population.

To improve impact, Congress should:

- Place a priority on off-track students, including prevention and credit retrieval efforts to get them back on track to graduation and to attaining postsecondary credentials.

- Permit follow-up services that provide continuing support (e.g., from a transition counselor) after young people leave schools or programs and as they seek to enter or remain in work or further education.

- Link WIA in-school activities for youth with other relevant federal programs.

Program Design—WIA youth program designs and elements should advance the development of high-quality pathways that ensure eligible youth attain skills and credentials necessary for educational and career advancement. WIA youth funding should result in the development of high-quality pathways and options that lead to postsecondary credentials and career advancement for youth.

Congress should:

- Establish that the purpose of WIA youth activities is to ensure that eligible youth attain workforce skills and credentials that promote educational and career advancement, with special attention to creating employment opportunities in high-growth and emerging sectors.

- Retain the ability to allow continued funding to support eligible youth over more than one year and for a transitional period after they have left the program or school.

- Strengthen incentives for employers to train and employ, and for colleges to enroll, formerly disconnected youth who have completed WIA-funded youth programs. One example is the disconnected youth tax credit.

Employment Programs—Youth employment programs, including project-based learning activities, apprenticeships, and internships, should help youth attain both work-related skills and supports that can help students advance in educational attainment and achievement.

These programs should provide highly structured and well-supervised work experiences that emphasize learning and skill development. Programs should be encouraged to build partnerships with employers, who can provide work-based training and learning experiences through internships and apprenticeships.

Congress should:

- Invest in a funding stream for high-quality summer and year-round youth employment opportunities that emphasize learning and skill development as well as academic programs.

- Focus attention on educational engagement and work skills development strategies for all WIA-funded youth programs.

Performance Measures—Differentiate performance measurements stipulated under WIA to align with the distinct needs of varying adult and youth populations.

Under the current performance measurement system, providers often serve primarily those who are more job-ready, thus reaching a smaller proportion of the population that need services. Provide incentives in the law for programs to serve a broader range of youth. One way of achieving this is by differentiating performance measurements stipulated under WIA to align with the distinct needs of varying youth populations. Programs should be able to apply interim benchmarks that are predictive of educational and career advancement and that account for the relative difficulty of populations with multiple risk factors.

Congress should:

- For youth, adopt measurements to mark the progress of all eligible youth, particularly those who are hard to employ or low-skilled. Determining the progress of all eligible youth would require different performance measures for different segments of the eligible population.

#### *Quality Improvement and Innovation*

Current law lacks any effective mechanism of promoting quality improvement and innovation among WIA Youth programs and activities. As a result, the field lacks a pool of quality models and practices that can help spur broader systemic improvement.

First, innovation and higher levels of successes should be promoted not just for national organizations with “branded” models but also for local organizations and/

or partnerships that demonstrate the ability to serve particular groups well and achieve higher performance outcomes.

Congress should:

- Create an innovation fund for WIA Youth programs. Partnerships that seek to develop a new program, improve an existing program, or scale up a promising model, all toward more challenging performance outcomes, would be eligible to receive funding. The fund would be used to drive programs toward meeting challenging performance measures, including measures focused on lower-income, lower-skilled, and other disadvantaged populations.

Second, older disconnected youth, especially those with low skill levels, present special challenges. Too few successful models for this population exist. Additionally, there are too few models for the hardest-to-serve adult workers (i.e., those with multiple barriers to employment, those with the lowest skill levels, and those with limited English proficiency).

Congress should:

- Establish an investment fund to encourage social entrepreneurs to take on these challenges and invent new promising approaches.
- Place a priority on funding partnerships among community organizations, colleges, K-12 schools, employers, and philanthropy, as appropriate.
- Include funding for evaluation of these new models.

#### *Conclusion*

Nevada Public Education Foundation is honored to provide input and testimony for reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act. This legislation has been successful in helping many of our nation's young people gain work experience and skills needed for gainful employment. In today's economy, it is imperative that the revised legislation be even more strategic to provide the opportunities necessary to help our struggling students and disengaged youth succeed through collaborative, targeted and deliberate activities promoting educational engagement and work skill development that will help them graduate from high school and gain appropriate post-secondary education or training to become productive, contributing members of society.

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Chairman HINOJOSA. And I now call upon Rebecca Metty-Burns.

#### **STATEMENT OF REBECCA METTY-BURNS, INTERIM DIRECTOR FOR THE WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN NEVADA**

Ms. METTY-BURNS. Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the Workforce and Investment Act.

I am particularly encouraged in being able to come in and talk with you about innovations because innovations require the ability to search out for feedback, take that feedback, and then incorporate that to improve programs and reach a goal of excellence. I think that this is a wonderful opportunity to take a look at programs that are in place and what we can do to make them even better, even more effective and respond to community needs.

I chose to look at one particular program that we operate in collaboration with the credit program at the College of Southern Nevada. The division that I represent offers non-credit programs and we primarily focus on skill-specific training for local employers for their particular workforce needs.

In this particular program, the Certified Nursing Assistant program, we worked in collaboration with the credit department to say how can we also, in combination with you, and provide some avenues for participants coming in with WIA funds to access that program and also access job opportunities from that.

The collaboration resulted in an intensive seven-week program, and what the division does to support our participants is also offer an opportunity for them to attend an orientation, helping with ad-

ministrative pieces, and introduce them to what they will be going through in that seven-week process.

We also make sure that they have available refresher sessions, review sessions, to make sure that they can succeed with their studies.

When I talked to several of the students and our health care coordinator, a lot of the comments that they make resonated, I think, with other information you've heard through this hearing process. The first is the opportunity that was there. Two of the people I talked with completed the program successfully and were very excited about the prospect of what their employment opportunities would be. They noted that it was essential to have additional support services, though, as they were re-entering education and they needed to make sure that they had some reinforcement as they were going through an academic program.

I think there are still some ways that we can reinforce that and we are learning from students who may falter through that program that there's more to be done and more to add in for their success. Additional assessments that are needed to make sure that they are matched up correctly with the program, that they have the foundational skills to succeed, when we are driven to move people through too quickly in a short time frame, so they can search for a job, we may not be giving them the full opportunity of what they can do on a career path, if they have the foundational skills and a broader understanding of what that entry level job may lead to in the future.

I'd like to recommend that in considering some innovations even to WIA that it be remembered that the community colleges are where a large part of the American workforce goes to receive their skill training and their education and that as you are building a career path it's really important to also build an education path with that participant.

If we could provide additional support services for participants that are coming in that allow them to assess where their academic skills are, give them additional support and mentoring to the careers that are open to them and where their interests may be, as well as make sure that they are ready and aware of what the job is that they will be seeking.

One of the students that I talked with in the CNA program said it was very important in the conversation that he had with his case worker that was very detailed and eye-opening about what that job as a CNA would be after he got that job, and other students hadn't received that opportunity and he felt that was a very valuable piece of the process and important to making sure there was a match to the program.

As we continue to talk about education and career pathways, we also would like to encourage a focus that moves from the immediate short-term training to also allowing the opportunity for participants to expand that to degree attainment or deeper educational attainment.

Again, one of the students that I talked with completed the CNA program and would very much have liked to have gone on to get his RN, but the funding stopped at the CNA. Certainly in a state that needs more nurses and healthcare workers, it's unfortunate

that he couldn't go on at this time with someone who had such enthusiasm and success and capabilities.

I also think that as we continue to receive employee—or I'm sorry, employer feedback in the contract training that we do in our division we become very aware of what employers are seeking for and any new information they need incorporated in training, and it would be important to include that flexibility.

As those flexibilities are added into the legislation, and allow the regions to really decide what's most important to them, I feel that innovations in the training program can come very quickly.

I appreciate the time today. Thank you so much.

[The statement of Ms. Metty-Burns follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Rebecca Metty-Burns, Interim Director, Division of Workforce & Economic Development, College of Southern Nevada**

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Workforce Investment Act.

My name is Rebecca Metty-Burns and I am the Interim Director for the Division of Workforce & Economic Development at the College of Southern Nevada. The Division of Workforce is a collection of programs that include an Adult Language and Literacy Program, Prison Program, Community Enrichment courses and contract training programs. Our skill intensive courses are primarily delivered through non-credit, customized training to local business and industry.

I am encouraged that a focus in discussion around the Workforce Investment Act involves innovations. Innovations require program flexibility and continuous feedback by stakeholders and in that process you can develop programs of excellence. I believe that by responding to what we have learned in operating programs with WIA funding there is an opportunity to make the programs more effective for participants and employers while also allowing the education partners to more comprehensively respond to the needs of their communities.

In feedback from two recent students in our Certified Nursing Assistant program, I found points that not only illustrate the promise of what that program can deliver but also where efforts are needed to ensure improvements are implemented. Their comments are specific to their experiences in one program but they also apply in general to WIA funded workforce programs. I'd like to share their observations with you today as well as some additional insights from the staff overseeing this program for the division.

The Certified Nursing Assistant program for the Division of Workforce & Economic Development operates in collaboration with the credit program at the College of Southern Nevada. Students receive the full CNA program offered by college instructors in a focused and intensive set of courses that spans seven weeks. Participants receiving WIA funding attend an orientation to the program conducted by workforce staff to help them with administrative items. Throughout the seven weeks each Friday afternoon there is extra assistance available to workforce participants needing additional educational support.

Charles Curtis recently completed our CNA program and at 57 years old exemplifies what an impact the program can have. He is brimming with enthusiasm about his new career path and, with his willingness to be flexible in a work schedule, feels his employment options are excellent. Charles had previous experience in working with senior care and while being initially nervous about returning to school, he gained confidence as the support offered and program structure reaffirmed his capabilities. He particularly liked the Friday review sessions and having access to that additional support. Charles had been unemployed for months and with his experience with senior care and an associate's degree it would seem he would have been identified as great candidate for the program. Yet, he only received a referral after he happened to hear about the program on a public television segment and then persistently pursued a referral to the program.

Scott Lester is also a recent student in our CNA program and only found out about the program by word of mouth. He also took the initiative and went to a referral agency and requested the program. Scott made a good candidate as he had some previous work in healthcare as well as having completed a degree. The case worker he spoke with about the program explained in "eye-opening" detail what a job as a nursing assistant would entail. While Scott felt his previous work in healthcare prepared him, he mentioned that a number of students had not received that "eye-

opening” information from their case worker and that they really should be aware of the realities of the job. Scott also mentioned his academic background prepared him for the rigors of the intensive program. He felt the additional assistance was an excellent option but was concerned that a number of his classmates were not prepared for the academics involved. He noted that a number of the students did excel in the labs but struggled with keeping up with required reading and taking the tests.

Scott successfully completed the program and very much wants to continue in the nursing program to become an RN. He would seem to be a terrific candidate and in a state that badly needs more nurses in the workforce so he was disappointed to find out that WIA funding is not available for him to continue with a degree program.

Our Healthcare Workforce Coordinator, Sue Folds, has worked in cooperation for years with the credit nursing program to make the CNA program successful. As she herself was an RN, she is also concerned that students need to be prepared upfront for the coursework and what the job will entail. While she can tell you of many successful students she also is quick to point out that she has had students go to one lab class and come back and drop out saying there was no way they were going to do that for a job. While there may be a number of circumstances that cause a student to drop—we do know there is a need to better inform and match candidates to the program. The students that complete the program but did not pass demonstrate that perhaps if there was an upfront assessment of foundational academic skills we could better prepare those students for successful completion.

Sue has built solid ties to healthcare employers in the community and provides several healthcare programs as well as contract training. She has many more programs on hold that would be beneficial for skills enhancement of the current workforce or allow entry into a healthcare position. Our programs are demand driven and currently start-up and administrative costs prevent those programs from being implemented. As much as she would like to implement more courses and support career paths in healthcare, limited resources determine priorities and pace of development.

The information I received from the students and our workforce coordinator highlighted that given the right client match to the program it can be an absolute success. Through close communication and collaboration workforce and credit programs can deliver training in a unique structure that answers a clear community need. The instructors and staff have worked to add key features such as an orientation and extra support to ensure student success. It is also clear that we need to continue with new innovations and expand support for the students to fill educational gaps and to work closely with referral agencies to make sure the program is promoted and candidates identified.

#### *Recommendations and innovation opportunities*

Community colleges are where much of the American workforce receives its education and skills. For innovations in WIA to have significant impact the colleges need to have the ability to play an important role with local businesses and agencies in developing a workforce strategy that answers the needs of the community. There is a current call for the building of career pathways but that requires a corresponding educational pathway in order to succeed.

1. An important step in determining an education pathway that promotes a career pathway is allowing the college workforce programs to offer more of the support services.

In its recommendations, Working it Out: Community Colleges and the Workforce Investment Act notes, “Encourage colleges to provide case management and support services to ensure positive outcomes. \* \* \* Community colleges increasingly recognize the importance of support services, but because they are viewed primarily as providers of training and not of support services they rarely receive WIA funding for these services. To enable WIA participants to succeed in community colleges, the colleges should have the means to meeting all their needs.”<sup>1</sup>

As demonstrated in the CNA program some students may need a details and realistic description of what the job they are training for entails. Students may need to brush up on basic skills and gain confidence to enter into a more rigorous program. How the colleges and its partners design and deliver the support services is one of those areas that should be rewarded for innovation. As core criteria, programs should require standard assessments of WIA clients that allow the workforce program staff, the case manager and the client to plan an education path for suc-

<sup>1</sup>Working it Out: Community Colleges and the Workforce Investment Act, Mary Visher and Donna Fowler, Institute for the Study of Family, Work and Community, December 2006

cess. What assessments to use need to be determined by local educational institutions in partnership with local employers. Even clients that are not anticipating entering a formal training program should assess foundational skills to close any gaps prior to their employment search.

2. Encourage innovations to programs by allowing flexibility and adaptability for training programs based on the feedback of clients, educators and the employers and including and encouraging contract training.

Workforce programs that provide contract training have the advantage of an employer partner providing specific criteria for outcomes. The relationship built between the college workforce program and the employer brings to it the continuous feedback, evaluation and improvement cycle that would be a positive for any workforce program. Another recommendation in *Working it Out: Community Colleges and the Workforce Investment Act* supports a WIA adjustment to contract training, "Relax constraints on contract training. Constraints on using WIA funds for customized and contract training, a system that works well for colleges and demand driven models of workforce development, have inhibited college participation in WIA."<sup>2</sup>

A challenge highlighted in the economic recession has been how difficult the current structure of WIA has made it to assist employers and agency with needed skills training. Employers do not have the training dollars to spend and as a self-funded division we do not have the start-up funds to supply for equipment and curriculum development. "Each type of provider—independent of its ability to train and place job seekers—has a different capacity to adjust to the payment system and reporting requirements imposed by WIA. As a result, some effective programs have opted out, or have been forced out, of the federally funded workforce development system because of its "one size fits all" approach."<sup>3</sup> Needed programs would be developed and implemented quickly if funding could be directed to start-up costs.

3. Support a sustainable approach for creation of career-education pathways that rewards workforce strategies that build from short-term skills training to deeper education attainment.

The "work-first" focus that continues to push the interpretation on how to best assist WIA clients promotes a short-term solution and perpetuates a long-term problem. The focus on quick placement often moves clients into entry-level positions rather than gaining advanced training for a higher level position. Incumbent workers need the opportunity to gain advanced education to retain their jobs, handle increased responsibility or be eligible for career movement. Discussion of career ladders won't lead to workable solutions unless workforce investment is viewed in career terms. Education and employer partnerships need to move from single program planning to comprehensive support for movement from short-term training to degree attainment.

If workforce investment is designed to reward community collaboration, support of unique local workforce needs and allowed to be responsive and flexible, I believe continued innovations in workforce development will quickly come forth.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to share the story about just one of our workforce programs. Your attention to the Workforce Investment Act is needed and appreciated.

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Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you. Thank you all for your testimony. I want to say that we had a slight difficulty, technical difficulty with the second microphone that is sitting there on the table. So instead of sending the microphone to Mr. Patchett, I'm going to reverse the order of questions that we're going to start with Rebecca Metty-Burns, and I will start by taking a five-minute period of dialogue with you. Then my colleague will have an opportunity to also ask questions, and we will move from my right to my left in the questions and I will wait to see how this dialogue goes. I may choose to have a second round of questions and just open to anyone, and so with that, I now recognize myself for five minutes.

<sup>2</sup>Working it Out: Community Colleges and the Workforce Investment Act, Mary Visher and Donna Fowler, Institute for the Study of Family, Work and Community, December 2006

<sup>3</sup>Training Policy in Brief, by Gwen Rubinstein and Andrea Mayo, pg 18, The Workforce Alliance, 2007.

Rebecca Metty-Burns, how do you suggest candidates be well informed and matched to a program that tailors to their strengths so that individuals are not set up for failure, while at the same time not inhibiting individuals from entering? And the second part to my questions, how do you ensure that your programs are accessible by a diverse school of candidates, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, those with what we call English language learners, and those of low economic backgrounds?

Ms. METTY-BURNS. Thank you very much. In order to really make sure we've got the match, the assessments that need to occur are several. One is an academic assessment to make sure that they have some basic skills needed to move into and successfully complete a program. So whether it is a reading level or a math level or another technical area that we need to measure to put in an instrument there that can give us some feedback, and if there's additional skills that we need to be brought up, we can do that right at that point.

We also think that there is an important kind of career goal match that needs to occur. Much of what the Community College system does is work with entering students on trying to sort out what kind of career are they interested in. So there's processes already in place and there's people with expertise in knowing how to make that happen. And it's important to match that up with the case managers that may be working with the system, to really start a little more dialogue between the groups, to make sure the right assessment tools are being used, the right conversations are being held with that participant, as well as opportunities maybe in just visiting a course, visiting an employer, really seeing what is it that would go into that job, so there is an awareness. Also to build that enthusiasm for a career.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you very much. I want to ask Mrs. Cook, in your testimony you mention several ways to streamline eligibility criteria for WIA youth programs.

Which of these would be the simplest to implement while keeping eligibility targeted to groups in need.

Ms. COOK. Ideally, if there was a way that we could make a whole school eligible would be great. We have schools that are considered dropout factories. If we could identify a school and work within that school, that would make it eligible for anyone in there, and that would be very simple.

Secondly, we would look at other risk factors and if there's a way to just base eligibility on those risk factors, being disconnected, not having the skill set, as opposed to the income eligibilities that are in place. That would be significant.

There's an enormous amount of time that's used in collecting the paperwork to prove the eligibility and it makes it very difficult, if not impossible, for some of the youth that are most in need to be eligible.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Ms. Cook, do you have any objections if we were to write in that we want to use our public buildings longer, and more days of the week, so that there would be more time for these students to be well trained.

Ms. COOK. I would have no objection to that. Everyone has limited resources and we need to use the resources that at our disposal most effectively and efficiently as possible.

Chairman HINOJOSA. And Mr. Brooks, in your testimony you describe training programs organized by the IBEW and the NECA. Are these programs open to non-members.

Mr. BROOKS. Well, the programs require membership to the individual organizations, like the IBEW and the National Electrical Contractors Association, to be available to the people who are members. And largely in part because they are funded by the members.

But what the NECA and IBEW do is try to provide a path, using some of the initiatives like the Building Nevada Initiative and Helmets to Hardhats, to get people out of the military, out of high schools, out of trade schools and right into the apprenticeship program, so the facilities can be available.

Chairman HINOJOSA. I'm concerned, in listening to some of the commencement speakers here in the last two weeks, saying that out of college graduates, only one out of five college graduates had a job. We have a terrible situation. And then folks who dropped out, you can imagine how concerned we are. I will come back to you.

My last question is to Mr. Patchett. In your testimony you stated that the vocational rehabilitation system counts a person as having a successful outcome if they are in their job placement for 90 days.

What are your thoughts as to how to track meaningful outcomes, while serving all people with disabilities.

Mr. PATCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that when you look at reasonable outcomes, I don't think 90 days is enough. I think the outcomes need to be that an individual is clearly on a career path, that they are succeeding where they are at.

That needs to be a much more long-term thing, maybe six months, maybe a year. We need to follow up with them and see if they are progressing within their job, are they receiving advancements, are they getting good marks and so forth, are we able to come back in there if something does not go well and provide additional job coaching to ensure that the individual is able to keep the job, and so forth. So that would be my recommendations.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you. I now recognize the gentle lady from Nevada, Congresswoman Titus, recognized for five minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll start with you, Mr. Patchett. Your testimony about the work of Easter Seals is focused mostly on physical disabilities, problems of not being ADA qualified, even the job connection sites. I would ask you if you would further elaborate on that topic about neurological and psychological challenges. We see that a lot from our soldiers who are coming home. We know the problem of funding mental health in this state.

Could you expand on what we might do to better include them in the authorization.

Mr. PATCHETT. Thank you, Congresswoman Titus. Absolutely Easter Seals provides services to individuals with cognitive intellectual disabilities and psychiatric disabilities, including support, living services and job training rehabilitation.



I think that one of the things that I would like to talk about that we're looking at, and actually we have a proposal on the street, is to utilize what my colleague next to me was saying, and that is green jobs.

We have an opportunity right now to be able to focus on individuals coming back from war, individuals who have various kinds of disabilities, and look at how we can include them in some of the green jobs.

I also think that the second part of my answer would be providing adequate support, providing adequate counseling, adequate monitoring of medications and so forth, and psychiatric disabilities. We have seen tremendous benefits and have been able to help individuals with psychiatric mental health disabilities to be successful, both in work and in living independently in the homes on their own.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. Mr. Brooks, I would like just to expand, you mentioned Senator Horsford's green jobs bill, and there's just an article in the paper today about the need for green jobs and how Nevada has been losing them to New Mexico.

I wonder if you would talk to us a little bit about not just your program, but perhaps what other kinds of green jobs we could help support that, build on what you do with the IBEW, whether it is training for weatherization, or training for manufacturing jobs, because we would like to get the companies that build the mirrors, as well as those who put them in. Would you elaborate on that.

Mr. BROOKS. Absolutely. A lot of what's happening is going to be through weatherization and modernization of existing buildings. That will encompass many different trades and crafts in the construction industries, as well as manufacturing.

So the JATC for the IBEW is one of many training facilities around the State of Nevada that are training individuals who do the modernization, weatherization and energy efficiency measures, as well as some manufacturing, and it's working with like Senator Horsford's green jobs initiative where it leverages these dollars that members of these trade organizations are participating in with some of the State funds and Federal funds, and nonprofit organizations to get the most bang for your buck, to employ, to train people who then have a path to get out there and go do the work.

At the end of the day it also takes companies, businesses to put these people to work. So partnerships that include the businesses with the training facilities, with the community organizations we feel are a very effective way to get it done.

Ms. TITUS. Are you finding that the businesses are cooperative because they need that trained workforce? And I would also ask you is if some of the members who could qualify for some assistance and not just have the whole cost come out of their own pocket, would that expand the workforce and the people who might participate in these kind of programs.

Mr. BROOKS. Absolutely. Right now there's no stipends, no scholarships, no assistance to a lot of people who are participating in some of the building trades programs that are teaching green jobs and weatherization and energy efficiency training. It's all coming out of their own pockets. It would definitely assist, especially those lower income people trying to get into these programs. It would

definitely assist, it would help them get into the programs and get out to work, if there was some assistance in that, in their tuition and their textbooks and even living expenses.

Ms. TITUS. Okay. Ms. Cook, you mentioned the dropout factories. I know there are a number of them in my district, and it's very alarming when you read those kind of figures. But also there seems to be no incentive for companies to hire students who have dropped out or have those kinds of problems.

I think in your written testimony you might have stated it, some things we need to do to incentivize businesses to hire these young people who might then get trained. Would you elaborate on that.

Ms. COOK. Well, we need to do something to incentivize businesses, and maybe tax credits would be a way to do that. We have about 1,300 youth here in Southern Nevada that are participating in the summer stimulus program.

One of the challenges we have is getting enough employers to give them a meaningful summer experience. We have thousands and thousands of other students that want a summer job. The Northwest Career Technical Academy has an excellent engineering program and they are looking at having everyone of their students have a meaningful summer experience.

So if there are ways that we could incentivize businesses with tax credits, or other things, it would be great because it does take resources from that business to supervise these youth or young people at a level that's going to make it meaningful and make it productive.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman, could I have permission for a little more time.

Chairman HINOJOSA. I yield the Congresswoman to provide an additional two minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. I would just comment to Ms. Metty-Burns what a great need there is for healthcare professionals in this state, for nurses, and for other kinds of technicians and so a program like this seems to be great. I can imagine that a person who goes into nursing that has no idea what that job is going to be really like.

So I appreciate your mention of the need to counsel on that before they go into that training. But your stories are also about people who just happened into the program. They just happened to find out about it, word of mouth or television.

What can we do better to do outreach and information so people know that these programs exist, and can take advantage of them.

Ms. METTY-BURNS. That is a great question because it's a huge need to make sure we do advertise and market, actually, the programs that we have available. We work closely with the referral agencies and of course they have numerous people coming in and they are working many cases and they do the best they can to make sure people have that information.

But one of the students mentioned that the way he learned about the program was on a public television segment that happened to mention the program and then he went and sought it out and asked for a referral, and pursued that.

So I think that there are some opportunities either in partnering up with interested employers and helping us market the program to the community. We've continued to start reaching out to the

community through communication resource fairs, so that we can also take that word out. There's a great deal to be done on that and I think it's an area where we need to collaborate in partnership to make sure we can market.

As self-funded programs, we don't come with a marketing budget, an advertising budget. So we have to be creative to go and reach into these communities and there's a great deal I think more we could do in working with community centers, community fairs, to get the word out about the availability of these programs.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you. I have chosen to have a second round of questions. I find this information very valuable and I'm going to ask that Mrs. Cook, that you take the microphone and have an opportunity to tell me, in your presentation you described how the youth councils can play a larger coordinating role in the WIA youth programs. I am quite concerned about the illiteracy rate among adults and young people who are teenagers in their 20's dropping out of high school.

So my questions to you are going to be how we can address that problem and as a member of my committee on education, whenever we've had Congressional hearings on literacy, both for adults and young people, we find that many do not know how to read.

Would you have any suggestions on how in WIA we could have those extra hours that I asked you about earlier, utilizing a building where trained teachers on reading could spend time in training folks to be able to read, and hopefully love to read books, to have their own library at home. Because if that were the case, I think that employers would find it easier to train this workforce.

Ms. COOK. Chairman Hinojosa, none of this can be done in isolation. Workforce is not separate than education is not separate than youth development and we have to have a connected infrastructure that support these youth.

So by partnering with the education system and using the buildings and seeing this as a joint venture, as opposed to WIA being stand alone education and education funding being stand alone and youth services funding being stand alone, if we were to do that and bring them all together, we would have a connected infrastructure where we could expand the services within schools. Maybe part of it is funded with WIA, but it would be a continuation after school in providing those services.

I think one of the most important things that you can do with the WIA reauthorization is to use this as an opportunity to create that infrastructure to serve the youth that's not done in pockets in isolation.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Let me share with you and the audience that I've had the pleasure, even when I was in the minority for ten years, to travel with then Chairman Buck McKeon from California, and we wanted to ask folks out in China how was it that their students were out-performing the American students in the international scholastic competition, academics, and we actually went into campuses that were feeder high schools to the colleges that were producing so many engineers and scientists and mathematicians and physicists and so forth.

The parents were invited to some of these town hall meetings and when I would ask those questions, some parents would take the microphone and they would answer parental involvement is the basic answer to your question. But the final say, that gentleman with the long white beard said if you will just remember this formula, early reading, plus writing, equals success in schools.

Ms. COOK. Right.

Chairman HINOJOSA. So this literacy idea, I took my Congressional district a year and a half ago and we started with the Texas State Technical College, which is a two-year program, and they chose to put up the match money, because Congress paid 75 percent of the cost of the books for these one-year-olds, two-year-olds, three-year-olds, and we have to raise 25 percent to match the Congressional portion. They said we will raise and we will contribute the 25 percent, and with the Meadows Foundation, which is in Texas, in Dallas, they have parental training on how to read to babies, one, two, three-year-olds and that is on-going now.

So I'm going to say that we are going to have to think out of the box. Whatever we've done the last ten years was good, but not good enough. This is the 21st century, and we are going to have to take, as you said, partners, stakeholders, employers, employees, and the entities, the non-profits and others, so that we can get the folks to become literate with the reading and writing.

With that I yield to the Congresswoman from Nevada, Congresswoman Titus.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I so respect that project that you did in Texas. I would like to see us try to do something like that here in Nevada and see if we can get some people to help us meet that match. And I agree with that early reading. I know that one thing that works is all day kindergarten. The earlier you start, the better you do, and the likelier you are to finish, and I absolutely believe that.

I'd just like to ask maybe a general question that anybody can answer, is that the workforce investment boards that have existed in the past are made up largely of business, or majority of business. And yet the problem we have is getting business more engaged, more willing to participate, more likely to hire the graduates of these programs.

What would you do to recommend that we make this relationship better, in addition to perhaps those tax credits that Ms. Cook mentioned.

Mr. BROOKS. I actually am engaged in hiring people and unfortunately laying people off sometimes, too, on a daily basis. And we choose a path to provide our workforce through labor unions. But the children coming out of the schools and with options to either go into the university system and pursue a career that requires that, or to go through trade programs and pursue a career that requires that, it's what Ms. Cook said was very important, that we don't live in a pocket, we don't live in isolation, that the youth services, educational, whether it be higher education or the K through 12 and trade schools and universities, we all need to be working together at a very early stage so we can have the qualified students coming out of schools, going into the universities or the trade schools. And there needs to be much better coordination, I think,

from us, the employers and organizations that represent employers with the university systems and with the K through 12 in this state and there seems to be a disconnect there.

And I feel as a father of three children, one entering into college right now, it's very difficult for a lot of kids coming out of school to have that path into a career, especially one that pays a living wage.

Ms. TITUS. May I, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Yes.

Ms. TITUS. Along with those statements, kind of like the same mind, I know that the system works layer by layer by layer. The money comes from Congress and it goes to the State, it goes to the State investment boards, then passes on to different agencies. Sometimes those different agencies can act as roadblocks, as opposed to facilitators.

Would we be better off looking at a program that goes directly to the institutions or the programs that are providing that training, rather than going to some kind of artificially established state agency, board, et cetera?

Ms. METTY-BURNS. We certainly would like to see that opportunity incorporated into the reauthorization or the rewriting of WIA. Because we go out in the, with the industry and business constantly seeking what is it that they need.

We have a close connection with the industry. And I would like to have that opportunity to build those programs around the educational attainment and the specific skills being requested by the industry, as well as continue with the feedback and improvement cycle, rather than sometimes being locked into reporting requirements or cycles that are made in general, rather than specific to a region, a need in the community or a specific program that's responding to that.

So that is something that we see that we think would be very helpful, at least in having that opportunity to put forth programs and receive that funding directly.

Ms. COOK. I'd also like to add that I think it's important to have funding maybe go to some programs directly. However, if we are to move forward, we need to look at our community in a regional way and in a systemic way and set priorities and be able to fund in that way, setting priorities for population, setting priorities for the services that are needed, and if there's too much direct funding that's going out, then you are losing the collaborative process that you could have and the strategic ability to be able to address issues.

So I think there's a way to do both, but for us to be effective and to move forward, we need to go from that shotgun approach to being able to be strategic to leverage resources, too, and be thoughtful about how the funding and resources are used.

Ms. TITUS. Do you feel like the boards are doing that now or we could improve that process.

Ms. COOK. I think the process can be improved, and it should be improved and Congress should encourage collaboration to improve the process.

Chairman HINOJOSA. I yield the young lady another minute because I believe that Mr. Patchett was trying to get your attention and I'll give you another minute to finish up.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PATCHETT. Thank you very much. I think that this is kind of the crux of the issue, this question really addresses this. We've got to find a way to get, I'm thinking more high school kids, kids with disabilities, but kids in general into real work experience and into real work and therefore the real work, I think we all remember jobs we had when we were younger that led to other jobs and other jobs and so forth.

Right now that's not happening. I don't see that happening. I don't see that those who have the potential to provide internships or provide early jobs are being connected with sufficiently to give, in the case of what I have been talking about, kids with disabilities, but it could be all kids. As a father of six children, I'm aware of a lot of issues.

So I think that would be very beneficial if we could do that, and actually look more at those who provide the direct service to really create a system that would be able to focus more on kids having positive experiences at the youngest age possible.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. This has been very interesting and as I prepare to make concluding remarks and go into adjournment, I wish to take this opportunity as the Chairman of this hearing to thank Dr. Lesley DiMare of Nevada State. She is the Provost. We thank you for hosting us here on your campus.

I also would like to thank Spencer Stewart, Associate Vice President, for setting up the facilities so that we could have this large participation and large audience. Also I would like to thank Dr. Rho Hudson, Dina's sister, who made initial requests for the arrangements of this facility.

And finally, I'd like to thank those who came from Washington on my staff, Mr. Ricardo Martinez, on my left, Paulette Acevedo, and Jim Rath, who is a Fellow working in my office on math and science projects which are of great interest to my Congressional district.

I thank all of you for helping us have such a successful public hearing, field hearing here in Nevada.

Once again, I would like to thank the witnesses and the members of the subcommittee for a very informative session.

As previously ordered, members will have 14 days to submit additional materials for the hearing record. If any member wishes to submit follow-up questions in writing to the witnesses, you should coordinate with the staff within the requisite time.

Without objection this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, the subcommittee was adjourned.]

