

Dear City Council Member:

The Chicago Jobs Council report, *Big Shoulders, Big Challenges: Preparing Chicago's Workforce for the New Economy* ([www.cjc.net](http://www.cjc.net)) examines the harsh realities and real opportunities Chicago's workforce development system must manage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Forty-one percent of the workforce will retire over the next fifteen years. Jobs created by competitive business in the global economy will require greater technical skills and post-secondary education. Chicago's youth, the formerly incarcerated, immigrants, veterans, the homeless, and the disabled, low-income and low-wage workers with the right preparation and system infrastructure, must fill this skilled worker gap.

*Big Shoulders, Big Challenges* documents the nearly \$283 million in federal, state, and city funds that supported Chicago's workforce development system in FY 2004. Recognizing system strengths and needs for improvement, the Chicago Jobs Council makes seventeen workforce development recommendations to expand or improve Chicago's workforce development system:

- 1) Ensure workforce development goals and strategies are incorporated in all city economic development plans
- 2) Enhance TIF Works in order to better link job training to economic development
- 3) Monitor and evaluate industry-focused Chicago Workforce Centers pilot
- 4) Maintain a regional approach to workforce development planning and implementation
- 5) Secure community-based access to one-stop employment services
- 6) Increase the number of transitional jobs programs to reach more populations
- 7) Extend Mayoral spotlight to the workforce needs of immigrants
- 8) Grow Kid Start, Chicago's summer youth employment program
- 9) Align priorities set by the Chicago Workforce Board with the city and sister agency budgets
- 10) Target certain communities for capacity building efforts
- 11) Provide more dedicated employment services for people who are homeless
- 12) Develop a comprehensive employment strategy for current and former public housing residents
- 13) Intensify re-entry employment support for ex-offenders
- 14) Reconnect recent high school dropouts to appropriate, competency-based programming
- 15) Improve high school to community college transition
- 16) Support bridge training programs targeted to working poor, disadvantaged job seekers, and immigrant students
- 17) Offer supportive services for disadvantaged community college students

We, the undersigned, support the recommendations of the Chicago Jobs Council. We believe that strategic planning and investment is needed to ensure Chicago's youth, veterans, immigrants, older workers, public housing residents, disabled, formerly incarcerated, and homeless gain job skills in demand by area employers. We believe that City departments must work together to develop a more efficient, seamless system for preparing job seekers for today's

and tomorrow's labor market, and to more effectively target federal, state, and local workforce development resources.

Sincerely,

**Organization**

Association for Community Networking (AFCN)

Association House of Chicago

B.U.I.L.D, Inc.

Bethel New Life

CARES Chicago

Centers for New Horizons

Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center, Inc.

Chicago Area Project

Community Assistance Programs

Corporation for Supportive Housing

CTCNet Chicago

Easter Seals, Inc.

Employ Alliance

Family Support America

Goldie's Place

Goodwill Industries of Metropolitan Chicago, Inc.

Growing Home, Inc.

Harborquest, Inc.

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

i.c. stars

Illinois Community Technology Coalition

Instituto del Progreso Latino

Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC)

Jobs for Youth/Chicago

La Casa Norte

Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities

Mercy Lakefront Supportive Housing

National Able Network

Poder Learning Center

Polish American Association

Roosevelt University-Dept. of Human and Community Renewal University College

Roseborough & Associates

Safer Foundation

Sankofa Safe Child Initiative

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Sinai Community Institute

Southwest Women Working Together

St. Leonard's Ministries

SWS and Associates

The Enterprising Kitchen

The Healthcare Consortium of Illinois

White & Associates

Women Employed

Women in Community Service (Chicago)

Woods Fund of Chicago

Work, Welfare and Families  
Workforce Board of Metropolitan Chicago

**Individuals**

Robert Barnett  
Tracy R. Poyser  
A.G. Kellum and Associates  
Mark Galban  
Marcia Medema  
Trina Whatley

**State and City Officials**

Representative Constance Howard