March 1, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murray,

**COVID-19 & The Future of Work**

**Key Points:**

- The devastation facing the American economy as a result of COVID-19 is unprecedented.
- Since its inception, the Public Workforce System has been the premier tool to regenerate the American Economy.
- The Public Workforce System will offer unparalleled solutions to the problems of the coronavirus crisis if elected officials choose to: (1) Fully fund the Public Workforce System, (2) Expand Emergency Grant Programs, (3) Invest in helping Americans re-skill for a future of changing work.

Today, one in four Americans report serious financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the number rises daily. These struggles include unemployment as well as the inability to cover basic household expenses. During this time, one in six Americans have been forced to borrow money or seek food bank support to feed their families.¹ This tremendous economic challenge must be the most critical priority facing elected officials at this time. The solutions offered by the Public Workforce System are unparalleled but require adequate attention and investment from legislators.

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The Public Workforce System is complex by design. The spirit driving this complexity is a belief in efficiency, spread opportunity, and a "vision is to promote pathways to economic liberty for individuals and families working to achieve the American Dream." Applied through multiple funding sources that are braided and blended, diverse organizational missions, and target populations, stakeholders include employers, community colleges, community-based organizations and are influenced by the state and federal context.

**Fund The System.** The Public Workforce System programs are designed to operate in tandem, together, and lockstep, to lift the economy and the American people together. In order to fully address the economic crisis precipitated by coronavirus, **ALL programs within the Public Workforce System must be fully funded.** Taken apart or funded separately, the system cannot adequately provide the economic solutions needed at this time. Additionally, the system is in critical need of modernization with regard to the gathering and sharing of timely, accurate data.

**Expand Emergency Grants.** Further, Congress must invest in and expand National Emergency Grant programs that enable a more agile economic response for working Americans in crisis. In order to ensure adequate responsiveness, this should include the call to utilize richer and more recent data than is currently available in the existing system.

**Support Changing Work.** Working Americans are experiencing a massive shift in the way work is being done, including both virtual and tech growth. In the past, communities and states have relied on Special Grants, such as the Dislocated Workers Fund, to support those in job transition. Given the changing vocational needs of millions of Americans, the Public Workforce System cannot rely on Special Grants to serve the needs of family-supporting workers. In order to upskill the American workforce in a world of work so reliant on remote work, Congress must fully fund the entire Public Workforce Development system. Reliance on Special Grants must stop.

**The Promise of The American Workforce Development System**

**Key Points:**

- The Public Workforce System is the premier tool to regenerate the American Economy.

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3 [https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/about/mission](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/about/mission)
The Public Workforce System works through a complex system of federal, state, and local statutes, regulations, and stakeholders. Its main focal points are: (1) full, self-sustaining employment of all American workers, and (2) providing a skilled and versatile employment pool to American business.

The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) represents over 3,000 individual workforce development and human resources practitioners who devote their careers to helping American workers and businesses.

For the last 80 years, the top solution for challenges facing the American economy has been the Public Workforce Development System. Developed through a system of federal statutes, the Public Workforce Development System was created in response to the Great Depression and is designed to weave together state and local governments, community organizations, and business partners with the goal of putting Americans to work, ensuring a skilled workforce, and securing a resilient national economy. The Public Workforce System invests in the talent and human capital of every American, ensuring that each can be self-sustaining, thus fully growing and regenerating the economy for every generation.

**American Families.** The anchor of the Public Workforce System is the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which funds over 2,000 American Job Centers and that serve over 20 million people annually. Through WIOA, the Public Workforce System has become the vehicle of choice to get people back to work with critical upskilling to prepare for their careers to maintain family-supporting work. One critical feature of WIOA is that it is not an entitlement program, instead focusing on investing dollars in Americans that have ongoing return through increased skill and productivity for the American economy. ROI Data needed:

**American Businesses.** Getting Americans into family-supporting employment is the ultimate purpose of the Public Workforce System, and in this mission, the system works to directly advocate for employers. This 2:1 deal further maximizes the Public Workforce System's value and investment. One key role of the public workforce system is to help businesses find the qualified workers they need. Through WIOA programs, as well as local and state partnerships, business needs are supported through an array of screening and referral tools. Businesses also lean on American Job Centers for other needs as well, such as diversifying their employment pool and connecting with untapped sources of workers.
The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals

The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) is a professional association representing individual workforce development and human resources practitioners, who connect jobseekers, educators, and companies to advance the American economy. NAWDP has nearly three thousand active members located in all 50 states and the territory of Puerto Rico and military posts.

NAWDP's mission is to advance the workforce development profession by providing training and resources to its members, improve the effectiveness of the nation's workforce development programs, and enhance public-private cooperation in the pursuit of full employment.

Sincerely,

Heather Leach
Chair, NAWDP Board of Directors