

March 24, 2009

Dear Legislator,

Our organizations are excited about the opportunities to integrate workforce and economic development strategies through the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in Illinois. We share your goal of strengthening the state's economy and recognize that stabilizing the economy will require investments in the state's workforce. The resources and priorities under ARRA afford Illinois the opportunity to develop pathways by which all Illinoisans can access training and education that will help our state's key industries get back on line and help steer the state out of this recession.

We know that you are working hard to stay informed as notices, guidance letters, and new information are being released daily. We applaud the state for being among the first to post a recovery website to keep Illinois' residents informed as these opportunities unfold and to invite ideas from all Illinoisans.

In that spirit, we would like to share the attached summary that highlights the major training and workforce development aspects of the Recovery Act. While each of our organizations has its own policy and advocacy positions, we are working cooperatively to: (1) share information and strategies for ensuring that jobs created with stimulus funds are accessible to women, minorities, and low-income populations and linked to economic development in the state; (2) ensure that workforce development and training programs put people on pathways to further education and better jobs; and (3) ensure that the process is transparent, inclusive, and efficient.

As you work with constituents, businesses, and other entities in your district to prepare for Recovery funding and to craft applications for competitive grants, we are prepared, individually or together, to brainstorm strategies, offer input, and provide information on best practices in this field. We have a breadth of workforce development experience that ranges from bridge programming to welfare-to-work to green jobs, and we represent a range of constituents that include minorities, women, low-income people, welfare recipients, immigrants, and others. We are willing to share our knowledge and expertise to ensure that Illinois has a strong, coordinated response to the Recovery Act that benefits residents, builds our workforce infrastructure, and strengthens the Illinois' economy. Please feel free to contact any of our organizations during this important and exciting time.

Sincerely,

Women Employed

Center for Economic Progress

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

Good Jobs First – Illinois

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Jane Addams Resource Corporation

Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

The Chicago Jobs Council

Center for Tax and Budget Accountability

The Chicago Urban League

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights

Instituto del Progreso Latino

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