

THE CHARGE TO THE COUNCIL FOR LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH: ENSURING NO WORKER IS LEFT BEHIND

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Michigan needs two things in transitioning to a next generation economy: more good jobs and people ready to do new jobs requiring higher educational attainment and new sets of skills. This transition is significant as it affects just about everyone in the state in some way. Governor Granholm's goal, as she discussed at the February CLEG meeting, is to undertake targeted strategies to ensure No Worker is Left Behind.

The No Worker Left Behind free tuition initiative now being prepared for implementation, offering two years of education and training funding to unemployed and low-wage workers, is the signature component of the NWLB strategy. It's a major, focused investment to ensure that at least 100,000 Michigan workers increase their educational attainment in the next three years – and by doing so, position themselves for better jobs.

What does this mean for the Council for Labor & Economic Growth? We ask the Council to adopt the Governor's vision and challenge to make No Worker Left Behind a reality, and to take responsibility for driving important components of the larger effort.

During the next three months, we ask the Council to take on two major pieces of strategic work:

- *Recommend whether Michigan should create a statewide Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) and, if so, help design and implement the new CRC system.* A Career Readiness Certificate is a competency-based credential that validates that the holder possesses skills employers are looking for in entry-level workers. The certificate typically focuses on basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) and on soft skills (e.g., communication skills, interpersonal skills, decision making skills). Many believe the CRC can provide a vehicle for employers to determine the readiness of candidates for jobs and workers a validated way to communicate their preparedness.

A number of organizations in various regions of the state are working on a CRC model that would use a common assessment to certify fundamental skills in reading, math and the ability to use and process information. Meanwhile, several other states are in the midst of implementing such an initiative. We think it's time to figure out what, if anything, Michigan should do on this front.

- We ask CLEG in the next 90 days to:

- ◆ Evaluate efforts in other states that are creating CRC systems;
- ◆ Determine whether Michigan employers would embrace a statewide CRC system;
- ◆ Recommend to the Governor whether Michigan should create a CRC system; and
- ◆ Develop a concrete plan including CRC system design and implementation.

We bring this charge to CLEG in part because we recognize that work already done jointly by the Accelerating Reemployment and Educational Attainment Committees can provide acceleration in figuring this out.

- *Assist in the launch and growth of the No Worker Left Behind free tuition initiative.* The initiative is designed and moving into implementation. We ask CLEG to:
 - ◆ Help build a broad, diverse base of support for this very big idea;
 - ◆ Work with us to push and strengthen implementation strategy and action; and
 - ◆ Assess what we're learning during the implementation of the initiative.

Committee Charges

CLEG has several very active committees that are doing important work on a number of issues that can also be essential parts of our strategy going forward. Our requests for focus include:

- *Low-Wage Worker Advancement Committee*
 - ◆ *Develop a strategy and an initiative that bridges basic skills development into community college enrollment.* Far too many Michigan workers risk being left behind because they have gaps in their basic skills that limit their ability to advance in a knowledge-based labor market. We ask the committee to:
 - Develop a strategy for how Michigan can both significantly improve basic skills attainment and link that with ongoing post-secondary education; and
 - Develop an initiative to demonstrate the strategy.
- *Entrepreneurship Committee*
 - ◆ *Help develop a comprehensive education and training system for entrepreneurs.* CLEG has done good work on entrepreneurship in the past, but the state has not adequately engaged the issue. DLEG is now preparing to launch a major effort on entrepreneurship in partnership with other departments as part of No Worker Left Behind.
 - Help develop a comprehensive, statewide plan through which both K-12 and postsecondary education support potential entrepreneurs

in developing crucial knowledge and skills, such as creating a business plan, securing seed capital, and managing growth;

- Encourage local workforce and economic development organizations and partnerships to focus strategically on entrepreneurship; and
- Recommend other high leverage strategies to reinvigorate the culture of entrepreneurship among Michigan workers.

➤ ***Industry Sector Committee***

- ◆ *Identify educational attainment needs and solutions in key industry sectors.* We've learned that working with employers through alliances within key sectors is an effective way to understand and help resolve workforce challenges facing multiple companies in an industry. We ask the committee to:
 - Analyze and recommend to the Governor the most crucial needs, opportunities, and required actions the state should undertake to help employers in key sectors succeed.

➤ ***Global Competitiveness Committee***

- ◆ *Develop clear metrics about the comparative positioning of Michigan workers in a global context.* There is much talk about global competitiveness, but little solid information about what Michigan needs to do to in the workforce area to put us in the best position to compete globally and the role of lifelong learning in global competitiveness. We ask the committee to create a clear picture of where we stand today:
 - Who Michigan is competing with domestically and globally;
 - Skill levels in those industries/markets/countries; and
 - How to fill the skill gaps that are identified.

➤ ***Educational Attainment and Accelerating Reemployment Committees***

- ◆ *Take on the Career Readiness Certificate charge.* These two committees have already been working together on certification questions. We ask them to continue doing so as an ad hoc team to lead the Council's efforts on developing a Michigan Career Readiness Certificate program.

➤ ***Executive Committee***

- ◆ *Assist in the launch and growth of the No Worker Left Behind free tuition initiative.* Given that the scope of NWLB cuts across several committees, we ask the executive committee to coordinate the Council's efforts to help us make this vision a reality.