



## **NCWorks Commission Quarterly Business Session**

Wednesday, February 14, 2024  
NC State University McKimmon Center | Webinar  
1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. | Raleigh, N.C.

### **Minutes**

#### *Present:*

Chair Tom Rabon, Governor Roy Cooper, Jeff Cox, John Loyack, Andrea DeSantis, Secretary Machel Baker Sanders, D. Jordan Whichard IV, Broxton Ashburn, Daniel Briggs, Shawn Brown, Sherry Carpenter, Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell, John Wesley Davis, Robert Doreau, Chris Egan (*Secretary Kody Kinsley*), Jeffrey Frederick, Christopher Gergen, Byron Hicks (Peter Hans), Stephen Con Hunt, Suzanne Johnson, Himanshu Karvir, Paul Lawler, Marti Martin Mathews, Mike Okun, Nikki Nissen, Olalah Njenga, Sharene Pierce, Cheryl Richards, Dan Segovia, Tammy Simmons, Cynthia Speight, Sandra Thompson, Gregory Thompson, Kim Toler, Pam Townsend, Kristie Van Auken (*Superintendent Catherine Truitt*), Hope Williams, and Annie Izod

#### *Absent:*

Rodney Carson and Ronnie Smith

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### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Chair Tom Rabon welcomed the Commission members and guests to the first quarterly business session of the year. He thanked the staff of the McKimmon Center at North Carolina State University (NCSU) for hosting the meeting. He then introduced Secretary Machel Baker Sanders.

### **Secretary Machel Baker Sanders Remarks**

Secretary Sanders noted that it has become increasingly apparent that we should incorporate the development of entrepreneurship into our overall workforce development system. She also mentioned a recent report from the US Census Bureau which found that North Carolina, unlike other states in the southeast, is *still* seeing an uptick in new business formations. The Census Bureau found an increase of 6.5% in new business applications in our state over the previous year. Nearly 172,000 new businesses were created in the state in 2023, surpassing the record 2022 number. Secretary Sanders stated the workforce system should prepare people to be able to launch their own businesses, if that is what they want to do. She discussed the Capital Area Workforce Development Board's Pathways to Entrepreneurship, which provides one-on-one assistance to small business owners in traditionally underserved communities. She stated the Local Area Workforce Development Boards have forged a partnership with [NC IDEA](#), and they continue to leave a lasting mark on the growth of our communities.

Secretary Sanders mentioned that February is also Black History Month and she encouraged everyone to follow the NC Commerce Department social media platforms this month, where they will be spotlighting

Black History, and the positive impacts of North Carolina's Black community on our state's economy. This year's primary Black History theme will be Education, including our wonderful HBCU's. In addition, Black-owned businesses recognized and celebrated. She reflected there are roughly 7,500 businesses in North Carolina with majority-Black ownership and according to the Small Business Administration, nationwide, Black business ownership is growing at the fastest pace in 30 years. Secretary Sanders also discussed the importance of teachers in all the lives of North Carolinians. She also highlighted that NC Commerce had recently awarded business services grants to 14 local workforce development boards, totaling \$490,000. The Workforce Development Boards will use the grants to convene local and regional partners and employers, and to develop strategies and initiatives for industry sector partnerships to meet the needs of businesses in Advanced Manufacturing, including those focused on Clean Energy. She closed by reflecting on the recent [report](#) on the Healthcare workforce by the [Caregiving Workforce Strategic Leadership Council](#). Afterwards, Secretary Sanders introduced Governor Roy Cooper.

### **Governor Roy Cooper Remarks**

Governor Cooper thanked Secretary Sanders for her opening remarks and recognized both Secretary Sanders and Secretary Cashwell for being at the meeting. He began by reflecting on Secretary Sanders' career in both the private sector and the public sector, and the tremendous job she has done leading the Department of Commerce. He then reflected on his entire cabinet and the great job they are doing running their respective agencies. He stated he appointed the most diverse cabinet and staff in the history of our state, that also happens to be the best. He then thanked Chair Rabon and Dr. Annie Izod for their leadership of the commission and stated the NCWorks Commission is contributing to the overall success of North Carolina. Governor Cooper credited North Carolina's well-trained, diverse workforce as the number one reason why our state has been ranked the number one state in the country for business for two years in a row. He further stated the commission has ensured that our workforce receives the tailored training the companies need to ensure successful operations in our state. He further reflected on NCWorks Veterans Services and the tremendous job they are doing to connect our veterans with the training and employment opportunities needed to sustain the growth of our businesses around the state. He thanked Chief Deputy Secretary Whichard for his leadership during the realignment process and discussed the importance of the workforce system aligned to economic development statewide.

Governor Cooper discussed Medicaid expansion and how this will take pressure off the private sector and help North Carolinians, including an estimated 14,000 veterans, to qualify for health insurance. He also reflected on North Carolina's growth into the epicenter of clean energy companies from all over the world. The clean energy economy is where the private markets are going. Governor Cooper stated he will continue to lay the structural foundation for North Carolina during his remaining administration, including the historic investment on our state's infrastructure. Governor Cooper reflected again on our veteran population and ensuring North Carolina remains the most veteran-friendly state in the country. He also discussed his new [Executive Order no. 303](#) and the statewide coordination to improve reentry for formerly incarcerated people in the most significant effort targeted at strengthening reentry in state history. The governor closed by discussing public schools and the integral part they play in our lives. He has declared 2024 as the year of public schools in North Carolina. We must invest in our public schools so they can continue to provide North Carolinians with the quality education they need to be successful.

### **Chairman Tom Rabon Workforce Updates**

Chair Rabon recognized Raleigh Founded and BlueCo for the excellent tour and panel discussion on entrepreneurship in North Carolina they provided the commission members. Also, Chair Rabon thanked

NCWorks Commission member Christopher Gergen for putting all this together for the members. Christopher is a founding partner of Raleigh Founded, which is the largest entrepreneurial co-working community in North Carolina. Chair Rabon recognized this month we celebrate Black History Month. He mentioned he hoped everyone can take the time to explore Black history in-person or online, support local Black-owned businesses and participate in Black History Month celebrations happening in your area.

Next, Chair Rabon acknowledged several individuals, beginning with Ken Allen, Director of the Employer Leadership Committee, in achieving 20 years of “Excellence in Service” to the state of North Carolina. Chair Rabon also shared congratulations to Tammy Childers, the Executive Director for the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, on her retirement, after 30 years of service with Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board. Tammy will be succeeded by Mr. Bill Green, as the new Executive Director. Next, Chair Rabon welcomed three new members to the commission, Greg Thompson, Operations Support Manager of Railroad Friction Products in Maxton NC, Robert Doreauk, Executive Director of External and Legislative Affairs with AT&T, and Sharene Pierce, the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer and Vice President of Talent Acquisition for Duke Energy. Chair Rabon thanked outgoing members Jim Van Camp, Leslie Walden, and Cameron McDonald for their years of service on the commission.

Chair Rabon reaffirmed Governor Cooper’s Executive Order no. 303. As part of the Executive Order, North Carolina is joining [Reentry2030](#), a national initiative that aims to dramatically improve reentry success for people exiting prison and those under supervision. In joining Reentry2030, the state has outlined several metrics which it is committing to achieving by 2030, such as increasing the number of high school and post-secondary credentials earned by incarcerated individuals by 75%, providing reentry assistance in all 100 counties, ensuring all eligible incarcerated individuals are offered the opportunity to apply for Medicaid before release, and increasing the number of apprenticeships completed by incarcerated individuals by 50% . Chair Rabon stated North Carolina has a goal to connect over 300,000 homes and businesses to high-speed internet by 2026. Last month, Governor Cooper joined President Biden in Raleigh to announce \$82 Million in new investments from the American Rescue Plan. This investment will help deliver high-speed internet access to some of the state’s hardest-to-reach locations. Chair Rabon mentioned North Carolina continues to stand with our military service members and Veterans. In recent developments, Charlotte-based Carolina Handling has been approved as a Department of Defense Skill Bridge Authorized Organization partner to provide job training opportunities for military service members transitioning into the civilian workforce. Within 180 days of their separation date, active-duty service members and select groups of the National Guard and Reserves will have the opportunity to gain civilian work experience through job training, employment skills training, apprenticeships, and internships. Lastly, Rabon stated Duke Health, Durham Technical Community College, and Durham Public Schools have a new partnership to prepare students for careers in healthcare. They received a \$29.5 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to establish an “early college” high school for students interested in pursuing careers in nursing, allied health, surgical tech, and clinical research. These students will simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree or workforce credential. Duke University Health System is expected to hire many of these students after graduation.

### **November Minutes Approval**

Chair Rabon asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 8<sup>th</sup> quarterly business session. Shawn Brown made the motion to approve, and Hope Williams seconded the motion. There being no corrections, the minutes were unanimously approved as written.

### **Presentation: North Carolina Certified Career Pathways Report**

Chair Rabon stated last year, the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management awarded the NCWorks Commission a NC Evaluation Fund Grant to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the 41 NCWorks Certified Career Pathways (CCPs). The purpose of this project was to describe North Carolina's NCWorks CCPs and analyze participation, participant outcomes, and alignment to labor market demands. Profiling of CCP participants was conducted by sector, region, and demographics. The report concludes with recommendations for intentional future data collection and developing an evaluation plan with a research team beforehand, rather than relying on post-facto data gathering.

Chair Rabon introduced Doctors James and Michelle Bartlett to report on the North Carolina Certified Career Pathways Report. Dr. James Bartlett stated they looked at data from 2016 to 2022, and they examined the 41 career pathways and looked at the participation and completion levels as well as alignment with workforce demand. The report describes the career pathways by prosperity zone. Manufacturing and Healthcare had the most pathways throughout the state. Healthcare and Transportation had the highest participation levels throughout the state, while Information Technology and Hospitality were two additional pathways that recorded high participation rates, but not in all prosperity zones. 55% of pathways participants were not working during their time of participation in a career pathway, while 36% of pathways participants were working during their time of participation. Additionally, 10% of career pathways participants were veterans. 65% of career pathways participants were female, while 35% were male. Completion rates ranged from 67% to 76% depending on the pathway sector. The highest completion rate was achieved in the Transportation sector, while the lowest completion rate was achieved in the Finance sector. Chair Rabon thanked the Bartletts for their informative presentation and then moved to the committee reports.

### **Committee Updates**

#### ***Skills and Education Attainment Committee***

Chair Carpenter stated their first meeting of the year was on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. They heard a presentation by NC Impact, Deputy Director Jasmine Johnson and Abigail Holdsclaw, Research Associate. They shared with the committee the outcomes of their two-year initiative, Our State, Our Work – Carolina Across 100 Initiative, in which the committee partnered by serving on their steering committee. Another initiative the committee discussed was the upcoming Webinar Series – Highlighting the Successful Efforts of North Carolina Reentry Programs for Justice-Involved Individuals. The webinar is scheduled for March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Additionally, the committee heard a summary presentation on the findings from the Career Pathway Evaluation Study and about the initiatives of the Workforce Development Boards' best practices and alignments to our commission committees' priorities and initiatives.

#### ***Employer Leadership***

Chair Frederick stated their first meeting of the year was held on January 17<sup>th</sup>. During the meeting, the committee heard a presentation on Wake STEM Early College High School by the Career Development Coordinator, Kimberly MacDonald. Additionally, committee members Tammy Simmons and Dr. Andrea DeSantis presented updates from The Employer Leadership subcommittee, on the new Reentry Prerelease Initiative which involves proposing the prerelease of justice involved individuals. Finally, Dr. Jenni Harris presented on tracking work-based learning for employers participating in the various work-based learning services around the state.

#### ***Local Innovation Committee***

Chair Speight reported the committee last met on January 23<sup>rd</sup> where they reviewed upcoming webinars and presentations scheduled to take place in 2024. The committee is collaborating with the Skills and Education Attainment committee and the Employer Leadership committee on the Webinar Series –

Highlighting the Successful Efforts of North Carolina Reentry Programs for Justice-Involved Individuals. Additionally, both Local Innovation grantees, Building Hope and OPT-IN and J.E.T met with the committee and presented updates of outcomes on December 4<sup>th</sup> to highlight the grant's progress and timeline.

### ***Governance and System Alignment Committee***

Chair Chris Egan stated the committee met on January 29<sup>th</sup> and they voted to approve two Commission Policy Statements, CPS 01-2024 - WIOA Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan for PY 2024 – 2028 and CPS 10-2021, Change 1 WIOA Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures. The committee also voted to approve the 2024-26 North Carolina WIOA Unified State Plan. The 2024-26 NC WIOA Unified State Plan communicates North Carolina's vision for the state workforce system.

### **Overview of the North Carolina WIOA Unified State Plan**

NCWorks Commission Executive Director, Dr. Annie Izod provided an overview of the WIOA Unified State Plan. She stated the 2024-26 NC WIOA Unified State Plan communicates North Carolina's vision for the state workforce system. The plan aligns with Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready initiative. Federal WIOA regulations require all states to submit a new WIOA State Plan to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education every four years, with a two-year modification in between. This year's plan focuses on many new initiatives in North Carolina, such as clean energy and clean mobility manufacturing, semiconductor manufacturing, broadband and digital equity. To prepare North Carolina's workforce for the clean mobility and clean energy boom, all state workforce agencies are partnering together with industry alongside regional community colleges, workforce boards, and universities while aligning and braiding federal funding awards to develop the training and certification programs which are required for employee success. North Carolina will continue to seek out opportunities to successfully carry out its strategic vision for workforce development, while aligning with the other federal systems and programs that help individuals gain skills and employment, and those that are aligned with WIOA activities. This new plan is the result of extraordinary collaboration among our WIOA Core Program Partners, and all our workforce system partners across our great state!

### **Approval of the NC WIOA Unified State Plan and Commission Policy Statements**

The Commission voted to unanimously approve the 2024-26 North Carolina WIOA Unified State Plan and both Commission Policy Statements, CPS 01-2024 - WIOA Comprehensive Four-Year Title I Plan for PY 2024 – 2028 and CPS 10-2021, Change 1 WIOA Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures.

### **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Annie Izod reminded the members about March 19<sup>th</sup> webinar-- Highlighting the Successful Efforts of North Carolina Reentry Programs for Justice-Involved Individuals. She then asked Dr. Honey Minkowitz to provide a brief update on the NCSU Workforce Leadership Academy. Dr. Minkowitz stated they are now accepting applications for enrollment in the next cohort of the workforce academy, which runs from October 28<sup>th</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The cost of the course is approximately \$2250. Afterwards, Chair Rabon announced that the next NCWorks Commission Business Session meeting will take place on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Wilmington at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting will be back at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh, and finally the November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting will occur in Hickory NC at Catawba Valley Community College. Chair Rabon closed the meeting by thanking everyone at the McKimmon Center as well as audience members. He then adjourned the meeting and wished everyone safe travels on their return trips.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Annie Izod

Approved on May 8, 2024