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Retraining and Rapid Re-employment for Workers Impacted by COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 on the job market has been swift and powerful. According to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), more than 1.65 million unemployment claims were processed in March 2020. Over 1 million Los Angeles County residents filed for unemployment claims in the 6 weeks from March 15 to April 25, 2020, the highest total in history. The unemployment rate in the County jumped from 4.3 percent in February to 6.3 percent in March and only 43 percent of individuals are still currently employed. But the impact of the pandemic on LA County workers has been inequitably distributed.

Many have already been laid off in the hospitality, transportation and retail industries. At the same time, Amazon and Walmart have announced they are hiring over 75,000 new employees to meet demand. The health care sector, where demand has long outpaced national employment growth, needs wartime levels of talent and support.

We need to ensure that those workers regain employment as quickly as possible in high paying wages and not to repeat the past economic history where many jobs were created in low-paying job sectors.

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For example, a laid off hotel clerk's communication and organizational skills, augmented by a certificate in medical office administration, say, may be well-suited to the management track for an urgent care facility. A displaced restaurant worker enrolled in a short-term training program could translate his or her customer service skills into an in-demand role as a medical radiologic technologist.

This retraining idea is not an entirely new concept and is one where the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) must continue to explore and identify to the resources needed to create these retraining pathways that include short-term education training.

As millions of people suddenly find themselves searching for work, it is more important than ever to help recognize the skills they already have. We must do more to help them translate their existing capabilities into in-demand work. But we must also connect them to education and training opportunities that prepare them.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) along with the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), the Chief Executive Office (CEO), the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and other relevant departments, within 90 days:

1. Collaborate and develop partnerships between key stakeholders in education, business and the community along with Labor subgroup of the Resiliency Taskforce to identify core employment competencies and opportunities that will inform the creation of demand driven training to help Los Angeles County residents obtain re-employment.
 - a. Explore partnership opportunities to provide for short-term certificate programs for growth industries in light of COVID-19, particularly healthcare;

- b. Explore opportunities to condense existing certificate programs to expeditiously meet COVID-19 demands and allows individuals to quickly get back to work.
2. Identify and facilitate partnerships between businesses laying off employees in critical sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and retail and large businesses hiring employees in the Los Angeles County, similar to efforts by Amazon and Walmart on a national level. These efforts should include:
 - a. Engagement with labor to identify partnership opportunities between shrinking and growing industries in light of COVID-19.
 - b. Facilitating agreements between industries for the County to retrain and then businesses to re-employ displaced workers.
3. Collaborate to develop a set of recommendations for how to incorporate workforce development strategies into existing County programs and funding streams deployed at various County departments including DCBA, LACDA, DPW, DRP, LAHSA. Such recommendations should identify existing programs and new/future programs offered across the County and detail strategies for incorporating workforce development strategies, including set asides for dislocated workers as a result of COVID-19 on County contracts.
4. Collaborate to develop a set of recommendations for potential incentives that should be offered to businesses to require them to invest in training and upskilling their workforces as well as incentivizing them to hire or re-hire within the region. Such recommendations should identify existing business-related programs and new/future business-related programs offered across the County and detail strategies for incorporating workforce development incentives.
5. Identify the tools and resources needed to implement retraining opportunities, such

as the need for state, federal and philanthropic funding, labor market software or data, online talent exchanges or portals , and provide an overview of the costs associated with retraining residents, including but not limited to tuition, training supplies, supportive services, and case management.

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