
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

**Public Oversight on the State of Collaboration Between DC's Adult
Education and Workforce Development Systems**



Testimony of Lisa María Mallory
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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Honorable Chairman Kwame Brown, Chairman
&
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Honorable Councilmember Michael Brown, Chairman

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Room 500, John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
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Good afternoon Chairman Kwame Brown and Michael Brown and members of the Committee of the Whole and the Committee on Housing & Workforce Development. My name is Lisa Maria Mallory and I am the Acting Director of the Department of Employment Services. I am pleased to be here to testify before you today regarding the collaboration between the District's adult education and workforce development systems.

As this Committee knows, DOES has experienced some significant challenges over the years that have been reflected in the performance of the agency. Mayor Gray has charged me to lead the transformation of the Department of Employment Services as part of a larger effort to create a comprehensive workforce development system in the city. I want to be clear that DOES is but one piece of the workforce development puzzle, albeit a critical piece. We will not be successful if we go at this alone, or waste precious resources by duplicating the efforts of other agencies.

We all know that adult education is a key component of a sound workforce development system. As the Mayor noted earlier this week, the District has had a haphazard approach to job training and readiness, with existing programs often having little or no accountability for their preparation or connection of residents to the workforce. This is something that must be fixed. As the lead agency, DOES is making sure that this happens and I am happy to work with our District partners to meet this goal.

The current economic situation requires the District to transform its system and its approach to support job-seekers in their return to the workforce. Many of today's unemployed have been unemployed since the recession started and many more have fallen off the unemployment rolls.

One of the first steps to ensure we have better accountability from our training providers is currently underway. All DOES training providers must train District residents in high demand jobs. Also, through our research on best practices and benchmarking, DOES recently discovered that the District of Columbia pays, in some instances, twice as much as our neighboring jurisdictions for the same training from the same providers -- so we have reduced that ceiling by 50%.

All of this – and many other transformational reforms including more efficient data collection and a focus on performance and accountability – will certainly improve the agency's service delivery. But we know that collaboration with other District agencies is most critical to establishing a highly functioning workforce development system.

Collaboration

Earlier this week, Mayor Gray announced that he is reconstituting the body of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC) to provide improved oversight and better outcomes for local job training providers. This new WIC will have industry-specific business members, community members, and government leaders, including OSSE and CCDC who have joined me today and other

District agencies like the Department of Human Services, Office of Disability Services, and Department of Human Services and will advise the Mayor on workforce policy and help to develop our city's workforce system. This new WIC will report to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to improve oversight for DOES and our training providers. I look forward to working closely with this key body as we look to recommend key workforce development policy initiatives to the Mayor, and to share bold and innovative ideas from employers, labor, and community stakeholders on how District residents can be well equipped for jobs that exist or are being created. I am particularly excited about the WIC's elevated role in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development, which has my strong support as well as the support of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Mayor Gray also announced that a viable jobs and economic development strategy is predicated on identifying new opportunities for job creation throughout the District; finding more ways to connect District residents to local jobs; accelerating business growth; and creating sustainable urban economic development. Since my appointment in April 2011, I regularly meet with both Deputy Mayor Hoskins and David Zipper, the city's business development director. As they develop and report on the Mayor's long-term strategic economic development plan, DOES will work closely to learn where immediate, mid-range, and long-term jobs are coming – and what skills the employers need – on such important projects such as the CityCenter DC, Progression Place, Skyland , Yards Park Development, Wal-

Mart, and many others. I am told that DOES has not worked this closely with DMPED in the past and it's something I look forward to continuing, particularly the newly recast business development and real estate development units of DMPED.

Another key relationship DOES must build and maintain to make certain we have better connection of District residents to jobs is the relationship with the city's two year old community college – the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC) to implement an approach to education that includes reintroducing career and technical education. DOES relocated and renovated three DC Works! Career Centers and one of these renovations includes a major partnership with CCDC. This co-location strengthens our current partnership with the University of the District of Columbia and the Community College of the District of Columbia by offering customers immediate access to an expanded training and course curriculum that includes supervised and facilitated Adult Basic Education Services and comprehensive GED preparation and testing. It also enables UDC/CCDC to become one of DOES's premier workforce training providers by offering training in the areas of health care, construction trades, hospitality, and office and administrative technology, which are high demand occupations in the District of Columbia.

We just recently partnered with the Community College and the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) to launch an important workforce training program – which Dean Connie Spinner from the

Community College will talk more about – that prepares 120 young adults aged 18-21 this summer in restaurant and catering, construction, communications (copper cabling) and other high-growth fields. This partnership includes an important case management component to support the young adults as they transition to work. We're very excited about this partnership as it means a very close connection to employers that are hiring in these industries now.

We've also strengthened our partnership with OSSE and the DC Works! Career Centers to better assess the academic levels of job seekers through the National External Diploma Program (NEDP), Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs for better and more focused service delivery. We also use these tools to better refer visitors to the adult career technical education programs at Phelps and Roosevelt High Schools.

I have met several times with David Berns, Acting Director of the Department of Human Services, to ensure both DHS and DOES work together as part of the Mayor's vision to refocus the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program as a bridge to opportunity and economic stability. Using technology and cross-agency collaboration, our two agencies will work to put participants on a path to connect to the workforce as soon as families enroll in TANF.

DOES is also coordinating with the DC Chamber of Commerce to creatively address the additional barriers that returning residents face. Through this partnership, DOES will provide access to entrepreneurial training programs and financial literacy skills in addition to case management. We hope to unveil this program in the next fiscal year beginning in October, 2011.

These initiatives are each focused on producing significant workforce development outcomes that will favorably impact all residents of the city to ensure that we are building the premier workforce for the future. I look forward to working with my colleagues here today, and others, to advance the District of Columbia's model adult education and workforce development system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.