

**Regional Workforce Council****Hosted by:****The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce/CareerEdge Funders Collaborative**

Monday, August 20, 2018

The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce  
**Council Meeting Facilitation Notes**

**Purpose:** The council will meet to discuss workforce and education public policy strategies and reach a consensus on policy items the group will focus on.

**Discussion:** Committee members will review policy issues and discuss the best course of action and point of focus for this work

**Attendees:**

Susan Bergstrom, Sarasota Literacy Council	Katelyn Kopakin, JFCS
Ashley Brown, Women's Resource Center	Sadaf Knight, Florida Policy Institute
Holly Bullard, Florida Policy Institute	Lee Kotwicki, SCF
Deborah Chapman, CareerEdge	Rob Lewis, Sarasota County Government
Kevin Cooper, The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce	Jeff Maultsby, Sarasota County Schools
Elizabeth Cordes, Bradenton Area EDC	Tom Melville, Sarasota Literacy Council
Linda DeMello, Cross College Alliance	Lauren Meyer, CareerEdge
Ron DiPillo, Suncoast Technical College	Martha Meyers, Manatee Technical College
Amy Diss, JFCS	Barbara Richards, Project 180
Kathy Drotar, Keiser University	Michael Richken, Grasp
Mireya Eavey, The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce	Toni Ripo, USF-SM
Lillian Elliot, Women's Resource Center	Christina Russi, Glasser/Schoenbaum Human Services Center
Martha Flynn, Booker High School	Jon Thaxton, Gulf Coast Community Foundation
Anthony Gagliano, CareerSource Suncoast	Mel Thomas, EDC Sarasota
Margie Genter, Goodwill Manasota	Casey Welch, USF SM
Patricia Harris, UF Innovation Station	Sue Wetzel, United Way Suncoast
Sarabeth Kalajian, Sarasota County Libraries	

**Council members described one or two workforce-related policy issues or priority areas their organization would like the Workforce Council to focus on. Policy priorities offered fell into three categories to guide future Workforce Council policy strategies.**

- 1) Expanding Affordable and Accessible Supports for Working Families (25)
  - Lack of Affordable Housing (8)
  - Lack of Quality and Affordable Childcare (7)
  - Lack of Social Service supports (2)
  - Food Insecurity (2)
  - Transportation limitations (3)
  - Limiting effect of the “Benefits Cliffs” for Housing, Childcare, Health (3)
- 2) Improving Access, Affordability and Economic Alignment of Education (High School and Post-Secondary) (18)
  - Education (general) (11)
  - Accessible post-secondary, high-value certificates (2)
  - Expanded Pell Grants, eligibility (lower hours threshold) (2)
  - Increased funding for public K12, higher education in state (2)
  - School security (1)
- 3) Improving Career Readiness and Talent Pipeline (11)
  - A balanced approach to attracting business and retaining, growing local talent (5)
  - Increasing soft skills (1)
  - Improving access to jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals (2)
  - Preparing workers for the jobs of tomorrow/technology advances (3)

**Review of Local policy issue—  
Affordable Housing Policy  
Landscape (Jon Thaxton, Gulf Coast Community Foundation)**

- ◊ Affordable Housing Policy Lessons Learned:
  - ◆ Affordable housing remains a top local issue despite decades of local planning and attention.
  - ◆ Other attempts to change development such as, impact fees or mobility funds, have been added to assist in density increases but have had little to do with implementing attainable housing for those under 30% and 40% AMI (Area Median Income).
  - ◆ An Affordable Housing Task Force has been created to bring together County and City housing officials to discuss ways to approach this problem with the Florida Housing Coalition.
  - ◆ Currently, new plans and community development presented before commissioners rarely receive any opposition because only one side is heard on the issue at commission meetings.
  - ◆ If there is a 30% to 40% AMI plan, community members will be present at the planning meeting to go against it, but very few advocates for affordable housing attend the meetings to explain the importance of these types of developments.
- ◊ Ways to Improve Housing:
  - ◆ People/groups need to be present to support this issue at the planning meetings. Currently these are one-sided conversations.
  - ◆ The argument must be made at these presentation meetings that, “if not here, then where?” Where will our workers live?

**Review of State policy issue—Sadowski Housing Trust fund (Sadaf Knight, Florida Policy Institute)**

- ◊ Sadowski funds are a dedicated revenue source to fund Florida's affordable housing programs and fund the Catalyst Program for Training and Technical Assistance.
- ◊ The funds are obtained from the documentary stamp tax paid on all real estate transactions. 70% of monies go to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program which funds housing programs in all 67 counties and larger cities, and 30% of monies go to the State Housing Trust Fund for Florida Housing Finance Corporation programs such as the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program.
- ◊ The state legislature has swept unused funds (\$180 million) that could have assisted with 160,000 undeveloped units.
- ◊ Join the Sadowski Housing Coalition to learn about ways to advocate for the correct usage of these funds and connect with other organizations that can assist in advocating for affordable housing. [www.sadowskicoalition.org](http://www.sadowskicoalition.org)
- ◊ More information can be found at [www.fpi.institute](http://www.fpi.institute), join the mailing list to receive research and policy briefs.

**Review of Federal policy issue—Pell Eligibility (Deborah Chapman, CareerEdge Funders)**

- ◊ Carl Perkins CTE Reauthorization (recently passed and signed)
  - ◆ Includes 7th grade to post-secondary and will support Career and Technical Education
  - ◆ Suncoast Technical College received \$400,000 to support this new change
- ◊ Reauthorization of Higher Education Act (HEA)
  - ◆ One of CareerEdge's policy priorities
  - ◆ Includes expanded Pell Grants for short-term trainings, FAFSA simplification, loan reforms, and more.
  - ◆ Pell grant expansion has been a point of policy advocacy for CareerEdge. The goal is to decrease the number of program hours (currently at 600 hours or more) needed for the Pell Grant, which would then include more short-term trainings and certifications.
- ◊ Economic Modernization Act
  - ◆ One of CareerEdge's policy priorities
  - ◆ Includes an increase in the deduction for employer-provided tuition assistance from \$5,250 to \$15,000 for professionals in a short supply fields.
  - ◆ This suggestion was added to the Act after Senator Nelson's Regional Director visited a CareerEdge Collaborative meeting and heard input directly from employers.
- ◊ Steps for Advocacy:
  - ◆ Meet with representatives
  - ◆ Provide Data, anecdotes, and guidance
  - ◆ Provide solutions, along with problem identification
  - ◆ Include companies and employers in engagement
  - ◆ Meet with local representatives
- ◊ CareerEdge policy advocacy partners include, The National Fund for Workforce Solutions, National Skills Coalition, National Youth Employment Coalition, and Business Leaders United.

**Advocacy Toolkit (Holly Bullard, Florida Policy Institute, Casey Welch, USF-SM)**

See attached for Florida Policy Institute Advocacy Tool Kit

**Additional Comments**

- ◆ Casey Welch (USF) shared that we need to advocate with a joint message, so if our individual organizations are traveling to the capitol we work together to overlap.
- ◆ Important Data to Track and Bring to Representatives:
  - ◊ Quantify the data for the issue you are advocating for (i.e. average number of households seeking childcare)
  - ◊ Real life stories (i.e. someone who personally experienced the benefits cliff)
  - ◊ Bring successful participants of your program to representative meetings
- ◆ Benefits Cliff:
  - ◊ Individuals are unable to keep their jobs because they lose their benefits once they start earning more money.
  - ◊ With employers trying to provide wage increases or increase of entry-level wages, employers have now seen higher turnover rates. This is, anecdotally, because the wage increase forces employees to lose access to their benefits.
  - ◊ A tapering system was recommended by many of the individuals present. Casey Welch (USF) recommends putting together a group to advocate for this change to make a stronger impact.
  - ◊ Read the Florida Chamber's report on poverty and the benefits cliff here:  
[http://www.flchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/LessPovertyMoreProsperity\\_FLFiscalCliffsReport\\_Web.pdf](http://www.flchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/LessPovertyMoreProsperity_FLFiscalCliffsReport_Web.pdf)

## Next Steps

- ◆ Purpose of the Council: a forum to support each other as community partners working together to better our workforce and economy.
- ◆ The council will also be building out additional committees (ie. Policy) to start working toward joint goals and ideas.
- ◆ Initial Council Policy Committee members include:
  - Sue Wetzel, United Way Suncoast
  - Martha Meyers, Manatee Technical College
  - Holly Bullard, Florida Policy Institute
  - Casey Welch, USF Sarasota-Manatee
  - Rob Lewis, Sarasota County Government
  - Deborah Chapman, CareerEdge
- ◆ First Meeting of Policy Committee to be in late September (to join, please reach out to Holly Bullard [bullard@fpi.institute](mailto:bullard@fpi.institute))
- ◆ To best represent the group's priorities, please send your organization's list of policy and legislative priorities (agenda) to Holly Bullard ([bullard@fpi.institute](mailto:bullard@fpi.institute)) to by September 10th.