



June \_\_, 2007

Representative David R. Obey  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services and Education  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative James T. Walsh  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services and Education  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Obey and Walsh:

As the nation's mayors assemble in Los Angeles for our 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Mayors, we are extremely concerned about the 50 percent high school dropout rate for African American and Latino young men, and the growing youth joblessness rate that has become an increasing problem in our cities.

By 2010, teens and young adults will make up the largest segment of America's labor force, as 41 million new workers enter the workforce, and a staggering 76 million workers enter retirement.

According to the research findings of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, the employment rate for teens and young adults has deteriorated considerably over the past several years, and the overall teen employment rate in the past three years (2004-2006) was the lowest in the past 60 years. Since 2000, the nation's teenagers and young adults, especially those without four year college degrees, have experienced steep declines in their employment rates. In 2003, almost 5.7 million youth between the ages of 16-24 were out-of-school and out-of-work, up from 4.9 million in 2000.

Additionally, according to the Center, last summer only 7.11 million teens worked on average during the months of June-August; and the number of employed teens would have been 8.63 million, or 1.52 million higher, if the 2000 summer teen employment rate had prevailed and 9.5 million, or 2.4 million higher, if the summer 1989 employment rate had prevailed.

We all know that a well-prepared youth labor market is critical to meet the nation's future workforce demands in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy, and that connecting youth to career and skill paths is crucial to ensuring their future contribution as members of the mainstream labor force.

Yet at the same time, the Administration and Congress have eliminated the Youth Opportunity Grants program in the federal budget. In addition, the Administration has proposed

cutting services to youth and allowing Governors to reduce or eliminate services altogether by merging the WIA youth formula program into a combined state block grant with WIA adult, dislocated worker and employment service funding. **Moreover, disadvantaged youth have been severely underserved since 2000 with the elimination of a separate funding stream for summer job programs.**

In past decades, there was strong bi-partisan support for a teen summer jobs program. As stewards of the nation's cities, we know that unsupervised and out-of-school youth are at greater risk of becoming victims of or participating in a violent crime, becoming pregnant, or abusing alcohol, drugs and tobacco. Alternatively, teen job opportunities provide young people with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience, develop the soft employability skills desired by employers, and receive earnings to support their own needs and contribute to their family's economic well-being, particularly among low-income families.

Accordingly, as you begin to work on the FY 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, **we strongly urge you to make a major new investment in our nation's youth of at least \$1 billion to restore your long term commitment to a strong Summer Jobs program.**

We appreciate your continued support for the nation's cities and for the nation's young people, and we look forward to working with you to address the unprecedented drop in employment and summer jobs opportunities for the nation's teens in the final FY08 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,