



ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS

**JOBS, EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**75TH ANNUAL U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS
LOS ANGELES, CA JUNE 22-26, 2007**

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SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FUNDING

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors is committed to promoting the well-being and positive development of the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, work experience for youth provides educational and enrichment opportunities leading to academic improvement for millions of disadvantaged youth; and

WHEREAS, work experience helps youth develop life skills and values that prepare them for the challenges of adolescence and the responsibilities of adulthood; and

WHEREAS, by 2010, the largest segment of the nation's labor force will be teens and young adults as 41 million new workers enter the workforce to replace the 76 million retiring workers; and

WHEREAS, the labor market for the nation's teens 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; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, the 2007 summer jobs outlook for the nation's teens appears to be worse than last year despite an improving national job market for older adults; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, in past decades, there was strong bi-partisan support for a summer jobs program for teens,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges Congress to restore its long term commitment to a strong summer jobs program, either by providing funding for year round youth activities at a level equivalent to or greater than the FY 2001 funding levels and ensuring that summer jobs are part of any WIA reauthorization or by enacting a separate summer jobs program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to ensure that any new targeted grant program for youth is funded only from the excess of the amount appropriated for the WIA youth formula program when it is at a level of at least \$1 billion and not at the expense of the year round program.

INVESTING IN AMERICA'S YOUTH

WHEREAS, the teen and young adult population is growing fast, particularly among minorities and immigrant youth; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, according to the research findings of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University:

- the employment rate for teens and young adults are at record lows;
- since 2000, the nation's teenagers and young adults, especially those without four year college degrees, have experienced steep declines in their employment rates;
- unemployed, out-of-school young workers have found it difficult to obtain full-time jobs;
- 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;
- while local Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth programs have put some teens to work in recent summers, these job placements have offset only a small share of the job losses experienced by teens; and

WHEREAS, the national graduation rate is 68 percent, with nearly one-third of all high school students failing to graduate;

WHEREAS, the growing segment of the young population is among minorities and immigrants who are most impacted by the dropout rates; and

WHEREAS, a well-prepared youth labor market is critical to meet the nation's future workforce demands in a 21st Century global economy; and

WHEREAS, connecting youth to career and skill paths is crucial to ensuring their future contribution as members of the mainstream labor force as adults; and

WHEREAS, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) provides the nation's only comprehensive youth system to improve the education and training prospects for at-risk in-school and out-of-school youth;

WHEREAS, the Department of Labor's WIA Youth Opportunity Grants represented a major commitment to addressing these conditions and increasing the long term employability of youth living in the poorest communities in our country; and

WHEREAS, disadvantaged youth have been severely underserved since 2000 with the elimination of a separate funding stream for summer job programs; and

WHEREAS, the Administration and Congress have eliminated the Youth Opportunity Grants program in the federal budget; and

WHEREAS, the Administration has proposed to cut services to youth and to allow Governors to reduce or eliminate services to youth altogether by merging the WIA youth formula program into a combined state block grant with WIA adult, dislocated worker and employment service funding,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The U. S. Conference of Mayors calls on Congress not to include the WIA youth formula program in any block grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in WIA reauthorization legislation, The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to:

- retain the WIA Youth formula program and authorization funding for the formula program at not less than \$1 billion, with an additional \$250 million to automatically reestablish the Youth Opportunity Grants program;
- provide flexibility to local areas to allow for a wide range of programs and strategies, including summer jobs, as currently provided in WIA;
- retain services to both in-school and out-of-school youth;
- preserve in-school youth programs and in-school services for 14 and 15 year olds;
- maintain the focus on youth development;
- ensure that any new targeted grant program for youth be available for both in-school and out-of-school youth, particularly those in high poverty communities and that it must be funded only in excess of the \$1 billion dedicated for the youth formula program;
- further, ensure funding in excess of \$1 billion to include \$250 million so that successful Youth Opportunity and Youth Offender programs continue to be funded as part of any new national youth program, assuring local support for such efforts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to make a major new investment in our nation's youth of at least \$1 billion to address the unmet needs of youth who have been adversely affected since 2000; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this new investment provide funding for a new initiative to generate summer job and learning opportunities for economically disadvantaged youth both in-school and out-of-school; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any change in the youth formula allocation and any formula for new programs like the Youth Challenge Grants be substantially weighted to reflect the population to which the funds are targeted, such as high school drop outs, youth in the juvenile justice system, and youth aging out of foster care; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges Congress to incorporate lessons learned from the Youth Opportunity (YO) Grant program into WIA reauthorization and incorporate the YO philosophy of long term, comprehensive support focused on youth development into all youth workforce policies and programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors urges Congress to restore its long term commitment to a strong summer jobs program either by providing funding for year round youth activities at a level equivalent to or greater than the FY 2001 funding levels and that summer jobs are part of any WIA reauthorization or by enacting a separate summer job program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to contribute to solving the pervasive problem of youth poverty by providing significant funding for a jobs stimulus program for young people ages 16 to 24, especially high school dropouts and those living in high poverty neighborhoods.

EXPANDING THE NATIONAL INVESTMENT IN AFTER-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, insuring access to high-quality after-school and out-of-school programming for school-aged youth and their families continues to be a critical priority at the local, state and national levels; and

WHEREAS, after-school programming reinforces a positive attitude towards education and staying in school, enhances the physical, social, emotional and moral development of youth, and provides support for working families; and

WHEREAS, affordable, accessible and high-quality after-school and out-of-school programming is an essential need for most American families; and

WHEREAS, the risk of youth becoming victims of or participating in a violent crime triples in the hours following the school day; and

WHEREAS, unsupervised youth are at greater risk of truancy, pregnancy, abusing alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, receiving poor grades, and experiencing mental depression; and

WHEREAS, children who attend high-quality after-school and out-of-school programs experience greater academic success, develop stronger peer relations, have better emotional adjustment and conflict resolution skills, and have better conduct in school compared to peers not in after school programs,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government, along with state and local governments, to increase investment in community-based after-school and out-of-school programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government to re-establish a summer jobs program for the nation's economically disadvantaged youth, to initially fund this program at a level equivalent to or greater than the FY 2001 funding levels, and to utilize the same needs-based funding formula to allocate these funds nationally; and.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to ensure that any new targeted grant program for youth is funded only from the excess of the amount appropriated for the WIA youth formula program when it is at a level of at least \$1 billion and not at the expense of the year round program.

THE REAUTHORIZATION OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

WHEREAS, In 2002 President Bush signed into law the bipartisan, landmark *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act. High academic standards and accountability for all students comprise the framework for federal education reform under the law. Achieving these objectives is important to the future of our children and our cities; and

WHEREAS, Implementing and adhering to the mandates of NCLB is proving to be a challenge and NCLB is in danger of becoming another burdensome under-funded federal mandate. Schools continue to struggle with funding, mandated annual testing, student transfers, and the requirement to provide supplemental services; and

WHEREAS, Schools need flexibility in implementing the standards of NCLB. A reauthorized NCLB should include a workable longitudinal or growth model as well as multiple sources of evidence to measure individual student academic achievement and school performance. There should also be greater flexibility in assessing and measuring the academic progress of students in subgroups, especially those groups facing unique learning challenges, most specifically special education students and English language learners; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient federal resources are needed to finance NCLB programs including: full funding for Title I grants to school districts with a disproportionate number of at-risk students, the main funding source for NCLB; an increase in Title II for Teacher Quality Grants that provide funds to train recruit, and retain highly qualified teachers; the 21 Century Community Learning Centers program that funds after-school programs for NCLB and other programs in NCLB intended to increase the academic achievement of at-risk students; and

WHEREAS, The Supplemental Education Services (SES) provision is a fundamental element of NCLB that provides disadvantaged students the extra academic help they need to meet the rigorous standards of NCLB. School districts are required to set aside 20 percent of their scarce federal Title I funds specifically for SES participation. Presently, only 17 percent of eligible students are participating in SES programs. School districts have been deficient in providing families the opportunities to participate in SES. A reauthorized NCLB should include provisions that would allow for all students who need extra help

learning and achieving greater accessibility to Supplemental Education Services and provide a direct source of funding from the federal government for these services; and

WHEREAS, NCLB provides for highly qualified teachers in core academic areas, but should focus on increasing flexibility for meeting the "highly qualified" teacher requirements, particularly for teachers of multiple subjects such as special education, bilingual, middle school, and rural educators, and advancing teacher quality at the highest poverty schools by providing funding to attract and retain quality teachers and improved teaching and learning conditions; and

WHEREAS, NCLB should include a class size reduction program to improve student learning, with priority given to high poverty schools. Research has shown that reducing class sizes has a positive impact on maximizing student learning and closing achievement gaps, particularly in the early grades and students who need more individualized attention; and

WHEREAS, NCLB should reinforce parental involvement programs and encourage community members to interact with neighborhood schools. Programs that encourage parent and community involvement in the school are vital in strengthening families and enhancing quality of life in our cities,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, The United States Conference of Mayors recognizes that to compete with their international peers, American students must graduate from high school with the academic foundation they will need to succeed in a 21st century economy. If implemented properly and funded, NCLB reforms will allow our kids to succeed and prosper; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the United States Conference of Mayors calls upon the federal education policymakers to work closely with Mayors during NCLB reauthorization to examine how NCLB is working in their communities and where improvements are needed, while maintaining a focus on accountability and standards. At the same time the federal government must live up to its commitment and provide the necessary financial resources to implement the mandates in NCLB by fully funding Title I programs to low-income school districts, Teacher Quality Grants, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other important programs under NCLB.

MAYORAL LEADERSHIP AND INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, mayors are the chief locally elected official in cities and residents hold them accountable for the quality of education provided by the public schools and the quality of the local school system which is not, in most cities, the mayor's responsibility, as well as the quality of life, economic stability and growth, health and welfare, social services, safety, transportation, environment, housing, and other services which are a direct responsibility of the mayor; and

WHEREAS, mayors represent all residents of the city since they are elected by them, and not by districts or at-large, and mayors understand that the city's destiny is in their hands since they do not work in isolation or separation from the community; and

WHEREAS, mayors have a fundamental interest in the quality of education provided in their cities because it is an essential element in drawing new business, building a strong and competitive workforce, and either retaining or attracting new residents; and

WHEREAS, the economic future and strength of our cities lies in the quality of education and related services provided to children so they are ready to learn and attain the core fundamental skills during their years in schools so they are prepared for postsecondary education and/or the world of work; and

WHEREAS, mayors understand the need for a nexus between education, related social services and other mayoral areas of responsibility which are key components to insure students have the support services, experiences and environments appropriate to encourage and support learning; and

WHEREAS, mayors are best positioned to forge a common vision for educational equity and excellence; establish collaborative groups and task forces focused on specific education issues to address problems; create a public and political will for public schools; expand services to students when needed; turn educational crises into opportunities; develop creative partnerships in the best interests of teaching and learning; facilitate opportunities for students, teachers and schools which otherwise would not happen, and make tough or difficult decisions; and

WHEREAS, mayors can use their bully pulpit to raise issues and confront uncomfortable problems, establish a dialogue, build civic capacity and engagement, bring all critical stakeholders to the table, and create partnerships when no one else can in the city,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on mayors to take on a critical and essential leadership and involvement role in local public education which can range from working as a partner with the local school system to address education needs, problems and issues to one where the mayor has the legal responsibility for the governance of the city's public schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors strongly suggests that mayors who decide to become involved in education first assess their capacity for their level of engagement and make sure they include all aspects of the community in their efforts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports a wide range of options for mayoral leadership and involvement in education including:

- taking responsibility for after-school programs, creating or authorizing charter schools,
- participating in teacher recruitment,
- establishing programs to assist in housing for teachers and other education professionals,
- sponsoring policies and practices in city government that encourage tutoring, mentoring and other volunteer work with students,
- visibly supporting school bond and tax levies,
- enhancing and encouraging parental involvement,
- facilitating business partnerships with schools,
- creating options for alternative learning opportunities and settings directed at at-risk in-and out-of school youth,
- developing education opportunities and settings for recently release juvenile offenders and those ending their foster care,
- helping in the construction and modernization of school facilities into joint use and community learning centers,
- providing recreation and athletic facility options for students and library facilities

- establishing recognition programs for educators,
- engaging in or mediating contracts when appropriate,
- lobbying for improved funding, and new policies and programs at the state and federal level that enhance improvement and change, facilitating the conversation and working relationship between local government, public schools, and higher education, having the governance responsibility for the city's public school system,
- participating in the selection of school board members and/or the superintendent,
- offering transparency to the school budget process,
- overseeing the school budget process and implementation,
- taking responsibility for backroom services for the schools to make them more efficient and cost effective such as IT, personnel, payroll, school security, and/or other management functions, and
- creating summer and during the school-year jobs, and internship and work experience opportunities linked to academic and career skill building; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors recognizes and supports the rightful role of mayors in doing what needs to be done to promote the interests of public school students and parents, and the schools, align the efforts of the city and the school system, and improve the lives, and education outcomes and opportunities of the children who attend the public schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports mayoral leadership and involvement in education that makes a positive difference in the quality of teaching and learning in the city's schools, whether through direct forms of involvement or informal means; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that The U.S. Conference of Mayors fully supports a myriad of choices in selecting the level of mayoral leadership and involvement in education including utilization of the bully pulpit to build political support for education improvement that provides the impetus school districts need to speed reforms; fostering greater student achievement; providing greater visibility to important issues which forces decisions to be made; creating programs when needed; increasing public participation; working to enhance funding and resources; and setting new priorities when necessary.

**SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN OUR
NATION'S SCHOOLS**

WHEREAS, since the adoption of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002, there has been an increased emphasis on the academic achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs). The English Learner subgroup under NCLB is required to meet certain benchmarks each academic year as a way to measure a school's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Currently, the law does not recognize the achievement of individual students; and

WHEREAS, nationally, over 10 percent of the student population speaks a language other than English in their homes. In the 2004-2005 school year, 5, 119, 561 K-12 students were identified as English Language Learners; and

WHEREAS, the academic and language development needs of ELLs throughout the nation are growing at staggering rates. The English Language Learner student population nationwide has increased by 60.76 percent since the 1994-1995 school year; and

WHEREAS, student assessments under NCLB have documented the need for significant academic and learning supports for ELLs and a deeply troubling achievement gap between ELLs and students who are fluent in English. Therefore, it is critically important that closing the achievement gap for language minority youth and assuring that all students experience high levels of academic success becomes a share national goal; and

WHEREAS, NCLB requires that all students reach proficient or higher levels of academic achievement by the year 2014. Presently, only a small percentage of ELLs receive full access to both English language development and the core academic curriculum they need to meet the requirements of NCLB and to succeed academically; and

WHEREAS, this disturbing fact not only has consequences for the English learners themselves, but for the schools and districts that serve them as well. An increasing number of schools are identified as not meeting AYP and placed in Program Improvement due to the academic achievement gaps experienced by ELL students,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors recognizes that English learner students must have the opportunity to meet the same high level academic standards set for all students. As NCLB reauthorization proceeds, the United

States Conference of Mayors asks federal education policymakers to allow for flexibility in achieving this goal, including the use of a growth model to measure individual student achievement without labeling students and schools as failures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The United States Conference of Mayors asks the federal government to provide sufficient funds to education agencies for the development of a systemic academic curriculum, including the use of research-based instruction models that identify best practices, to ensure that English learners achieve and sustain high levels of academic proficiency, linguistic skills and multi-cultural competency and are prepared for 21st Century citizenship.

**PROVIDING PRISONERS REENTERING SOCIETY AND EX-OFFENDERS GREATER
OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTAIN SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

WHEREAS, approximately 650,000 state and federal prisoners reenter society each year; and

WHEREAS, persons leaving jail or prison often lack not only the most basic necessities, such as food, shelter and clothing, but also job skills, training and placement; transitional housing; and support services, including substance abuse and mental health treatment; and

WHEREAS, about half of all former prisoners are returned to prison for a new crime or parole violation within three years; and

WHEREAS, the social costs of reentry have profound consequences for our communities, including public health risks, homelessness, unemployment and public safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, incarceration and the challenges of reentry have a profound impact on the family members of those who are incarcerated, with children of those in prison at a higher risk of living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, more than two-thirds of the incarcerated population has a high rate of infectious disease, substance abuse and/or mental health disorders; and

WHEREAS, close to 27 percent of prisoners expect to go to homeless shelters upon release from prison, and 16 percent of the local jail population is mentally ill; and

WHEREAS, many former prisoners are denied employment, educational assistance, TANF benefits, subsidized housing, parental rights, health care, driver's licenses, and the right to vote, and barriers to these rights and services often prevent effective reintegration into society,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors supports efforts to more effectively integrate persons leaving jail or prison back into society, including:

- providing education to prison inmates;
- providing inmates with the necessary skills to become productive citizens upon return to society;
- providing inmates with opportunities to gain the skills to be effective and to have positive influences in the life of

their family upon reentry, including their roles as parents;

- providing support suited to the particular needs of children of incarcerated individuals to improve their life chances;
- allowing individuals returning from prison the option of living in public housing when it is in the best interests of their families and communities;
- providing government jobs for re-entering individuals;
- providing tax subsidies for businesses that hire returning individuals;
- changing employment requirements which prohibit hiring people with criminal records, and providing incentives to hire returning prisoners;
- encouraging businesses which contract with the government to hire people with a criminal record, and providing businesses tax credits for bonding them; and
- encouraging governments and other employers to consider establishing a special temporary worker category for returning prisoners to make it easier for them to get a first job.

IMPROVING ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

WHEREAS, today, more than 45 percent of public school students tested in kindergarten and middle school fail to achieve age appropriate proficiency in reading and mathematics, and only percent of urban middle school students achieve proficiency in math; and

WHEREAS, lower income children consistently perform worse in achievement tests in both subjects than higher income children, make up a disproportionately large share of those who drop out, and drop out at twice the overall rate; and

WHEREAS, only one-half of lower income children even begin college, compared with more than 75 percent of higher income children; and

WHEREAS, the more success a child achieves in school, the less likely he or she is to live in poverty as an adult, and the poverty rate of high school dropouts is three times that of those who graduate; and

WHEREAS, only about half of all Black, Hispanic, and Native American students who enter ninth grade will graduate 12th grade on time, and graduation rates in some cities for minority males as a group are even lower; and

WHEREAS, in contrast, the overall high school graduation rate in the U.S. is 68 percent, and for white students it is 75 percent,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government to:

- strengthen its investment in quality neighborhood primary and secondary public schools;
- increase its investment in all public schools so that all children have an equal opportunity to learn, and use the additional funding to improve teachers' salaries, finance school construction and modernization, make art and music education available to all students, encourage diverse and creative curricula, provide before- and after-school programming, and encourage a smaller student-to-teacher ratio in classrooms;
- adopt the policy recommendations of the National Academies to improve K-12 science and mathematics education and provide support for recruiting more qualified teachers and setting higher standards for students;

- reform the No Child Left Behind Act to address disincentives for high-quality teachers to teach at poorly performing urban schools;
- fund demonstration projects designed to improve teacher quality across all grades of public schools;
- consider options for reforming K-12 education bureaucracies to achieve savings and greater effectiveness;
- encourage the development of and provide support for school district institution of student-centered contracts and increasing teacher pay to improve education results;
- fully fund English as a Second Language programs in public schools; and
- develop more effective approaches to student retention in drop-out prevention and mitigation programs - approaches which begin in the primary grades and continue through high school - and strategies which extend to students who have already dropped out, to reconnect them with school and jobs.

INCREASING ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

WHEREAS, while three-quarters of new job growth will require some training and education beyond high school, and between 2000 and 2020, the number of workers with at least some college education is projected to increase by just four percent; and

WHEREAS, a college education is increasingly unaffordable to a large portion of the public, as evidenced by the fact that since 1980 the inflation-adjusted cost of tuition at a four-year public college has increased by 190 percent while median family income has increased by only about 18 percent; and

WHEREAS, as of 2005, only 19 percent of working-age adults with incomes below the median income had earned a college credential, compared to more than 46 percent of higher income adults who had earned a credential; and

WHEREAS, high school graduates trying to pay for college currently turn to an array of credit subsidies provided by federal and state governments and private institutions; and

WHEREAS, while aid available for higher education has increased, borrowing to pay for college is not a viable long-term solution for many students because the debt payments will be beyond their ability to pay; and

WHEREAS, students from lower income families are finding they cannot afford college because costs have increased so much faster than the caps for federal subsidies, such as Pell Grants; and

WHEREAS, the Administration has proposed significantly cutting or eliminating funding for Adult Education, TRIO programs, and vocational education - all important federal post-secondary education programs; and

WHEREAS, millions of low-income students don't benefit from current federal education tax incentives; and

WHEREAS, many states have state-sponsored college savings programs, but not all of them match contributions made by low- and moderate-income families to their accounts,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors calls on the federal government to:
Increase the value of the Pell Grant for today's low-income

students who cannot take advantage of lifetime learning accounts; Protect existing programs and benefits that help create an educated and competitive work force: Pell Grants, Adult Education, TRIO programs, and vocational education; Consider consolidating existing higher education tax credits, such as the Hope Scholarship, the Lifetime Learning Credit, and the higher education deduction, into a single consolidated College Tax Credit that could be used at accredited colleges or universities by students and workers seeking to start or continue their educations, and in conjunction with lifetime learning savings accounts; and Link College Tax Credits to Individual Development Accounts to encourage low-income families to save, build assets, and work towards paying for post-secondary education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors urges state governments to provide matching grants to low- and moderate-income families as part of their state-sponsored college savings programs.

STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS, the Workforce Investment Act, the law creating nation's largest program for providing skills training, can provide training for less than one percent of the nation's workforce; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has cut funding for job training programs by over \$1 billion since FY 2002; and

WHEREAS, the Administration has proposed an additional \$950 million in funding cuts for job training programs in the FY 2008 budget; and

WHEREAS, the current federal restrictions on training do not allow for a variety of training tools and strategies necessary for individuals to gain skills to advance beyond entry level positions; and

WHEREAS, the nation faces the prospect of acute skills shortages, with one estimate indicating that the United States faces a shortfall of 14 million workers for skilled jobs by 2020, as job demands continue to rise but the education level of the workforce remains static; and

WHEREAS, the building trades continue to provide a steady supply of good paying jobs, often on projects which positively impact local economies, yet sufficient training and apprenticeship programs which prepare workers for jobs in the building trades are lacking; and

WHEREAS, local governments together with the business community and the workforce and education systems must identify strategies needed to address the skills requirements demanded by the local labor market; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive skills training and education strategies must be part of local job training systems that align with the labor market demands of local economies where businesses - the end users of the system - are located,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government to:

- strengthen the Workforce Investment Act by increasing funding, improving regional and private-sector coordination, and expanding outreach to immigrants;

- provide incentives for public-private partnerships in workforce development;
- provide additional training and apprenticeship programs which prepare workers for jobs in the building trades;
- enlist regional employers as partners having a vested interest in the success of workforce development programs;
- provide adequate funding for federal programs which have demonstrated success in developing a competitive workforce, such as summer youth employment, Youth Incentive Entitlement Pilot Projects, adult education/G.E.D, literacy, Pell grants, TRIO, vocational education, and incumbent worker programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors calls on business leaders to:

- invest in workforce education and career exploration counseling for high school students;
- encourage employees (especially within large businesses) to participate in workforce development programs available in high schools, particularly those with lower college placement rates;
- work with educators and local leaders to develop appropriate curriculum that is responsive to regional workforce trends;
- collaborate with state education and workforce leaders to identify key regional job trends;
- support federal and state standards-based education.

INCREASING FUNDING FOR YOUTHBUILD

WHEREAS, there are 2.4 million young low-income adults in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24 who have left high school without a diploma or who are unemployed; and

WHEREAS, in YouthBuild programs, unemployed and undereducated young people ages 16-24 work toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people; and

WHEREAS, strong emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to success; and

WHEREAS, in YouthBuild programs the most disadvantaged youth are brought into the productive workforce; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 there were more than 220 YouthBuild programs in 42 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, engaging approximately 8,000 young adults; and

WHEREAS, from 2001 to 2005, 89 percent of YouthBuild students entered the program without their GED or diploma, 33 percent had been adjudicated, and 27 percent received public assistance prior to joining YouthBuild and, in spite of these overwhelming odds, 58 percent completed the program and 78 percent of graduates went on to college or jobs averaging \$8.41/hour; and

WHEREAS, YouthBuild is a public-private partnership in which each YouthBuild program secures its own funding, generally a mix of government (federal, state, and local) and private support; and

WHEREAS, federal support for YouthBuild was first authorized under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1992 and reauthorized within the Workforce Investment Act under the U.S. Department of Labor by the YouthBuild Transfer Act (Public Law 109-281) in September 2006, when it passed by unanimous consent in both Houses of Congress and was signed into law by President George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, since 1993 more than 68,000 YouthBuild students have produced over 16,000 units of low-income housing; and

WHEREAS, the nation's ability to reconnect unemployed and undereducated young adults is critical to workforce development, crime prevention, and economic development,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal, state, and local governments to increase their investment in YouthBuild; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to increase the level of the annual funding for the YouthBuild program to at least \$140 million; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to ensure that the YouthBuild program is funded only from the excess of the amount appropriated for the WIA youth formula program when it is at a level of at least \$1 billion and not at the expense of the year-round program.

MAKING TANF WORK REQUIREMENTS MORE FLEXIBLE

WHEREAS, on February 8, 2006, President George W. Bush signed budget legislation that extends the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program through 2010 and requires most states to substantially increase the number of parents receiving TANF who have jobs or are in training; and

WHEREAS, forcing individuals into the workforce without the proper career development skills will not break the cycle of poverty; and

WHEREAS, although TANF allows three educational activities - vocational education training, secondary school attendance, and education directly related to employment - to count toward a state's work participation rate, there are limitations:

- vocational education training can only count toward a recipient's work requirement for up to 12 months;
- education directly related to employment can only count toward the work requirement of an adult high school dropout or teen parent; and
- no more than 30 percent of recipients counted toward the state's work participation rate may participate in vocational training or be a teen parent in secondary school,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that TANF work requirements be waived to allow individuals to attend a community college or university to develop a career, not just a job; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that TANF regulations allow more flexibility so that participation in mental health and substance abuse programs can count towards meeting the "work participation" requirement.

PROVIDING PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT

WHEREAS, unemployment and a lack of both skills and quality jobs are major causes of poverty; and

WHEREAS, in areas of high unemployment and stagnant job growth it is especially hard for low-skilled workers to obtain jobs; and

WHEREAS, public service employment would stabilize the workforce supply and increase wage stability for all workers; and

WHEREAS, over the years, the U.S. Department of Labor has funded public service employment programs targeted to economically disadvantaged or long-term unemployed individuals on a temporary, short-term basis as a means of providing income maintenance or human capital development for workers and valuable services for the community that would not otherwise have been available; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Labor is currently funding public service employment efforts through the Youthbuild program and a waiver provided to the State of Texas which permits public service employment under a National Emergency Grant for residents affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government to provide funding for a public service employment program which hires economically disadvantaged and long-term unemployed individual to work in projects which address identified community needs.

INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

WHEREAS, The U.S. Conference of Mayors has long been an advocate of increasing the federal minimum wage to reduce the hardship on low-income workers; and

WHEREAS, real median income increased by 0.6 percent between 2004 and 2005, but all of that increase occurred among the top 20 percent of income earners, and the percentage change in real median income for each of the bottom four quintiles declined; and

WHEREAS, since September 1997, the purchasing power of the minimum wage has deteriorated by 20 percent and, after adjusting for inflation, the value of the minimum wage is at its lowest level since 1955; and

WHEREAS, wage inequality has been increasing, in part because of the declining real value of the minimum wage, which currently is 31 percent of the average hourly wage of American workers, the lowest level since the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Conference President Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer sent a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi early in 2007 expressing support for legislation increasing the federal minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour over the next two years; and

WHEREAS, Congress approved legislation on May 24 which was signed into law by the President on May 25 increasing the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour over the next two years,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The United States Conference of Mayors commends Congress and the President for enacting legislation that will increase the federal minimum wage from the current level of \$5.15 per hour to \$7.25 per hour over the next two years.

USING THE TAX CODE TO HELP LOWER INCOME FAMILIES DEVELOP ASSETS

WHEREAS, the Earned Income Tax Credit is the nation's largest wage support for low-income workers, currently benefiting more than 21 million of America's workers, or approximately 15 percent of the nation's labor force; and

WHEREAS, while the EITC is an effective support for many low income workers, it does not provide needed assistance to most low wage childless workers, and two-worker families are much less likely to qualify for the EITC than one-worker families; and

WHEREAS, renewing the Saver's Credit would provide matching contributions to retirement plans of up to 50 percent for families earning \$50,000 or less per year, up to a maximum of \$1,000; and

WHEREAS, California's "ReadyReturn" program has reduced the tax filing burden for many eligible Californians through the State's use of information it already has on hand, such as that contained in W-2 forms, to provide taxpayers with a completed return which they can approve and submit to the State; and

WHEREAS, while most of the major new federal policy expansions that benefit lower and middle income households have happened through the tax code, most of the subsidies available have disparate eligibility standards, are difficult to understand, and vary between nonrefundable and refundable tax credits; and

WHEREAS, consolidating all of the existing tax credits into a Comprehensive Family Tax Credit could expand access to the various tax credits now available and ease administrative burdens and costs; and

WHEREAS, savings incentives, such as preferential tax treatment of IRAs and 401(k)s, do not help low- and moderate-income families, and nearly two-thirds of the benefits go to the top 20 percent of income earners; and

WHEREAS, many low-income families and individuals are forced to go to expensive tax preparation services and thus spend a significant portion of the tax credits they are due just to be able to file a return,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to reform the federal tax code so that the benefits available to lower income families will be increased, simplified, and easier to access; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that specific reforms to the federal tax code include:

- substantially expanding the EITC so that it better rewards hard working, lower income families and expands eligibility for single adults by increasing the maximum benefit for childless, single adults from \$399 to \$1,600, allowing two income households to deduct the lower of the two incomes from their eligibility, indexing the EITC to the minimum wage, and simplifying regulations to fit the current demographics and ensure that it is helping the people who need it most;
- increasing and making refundable the federal Saver's Credit, which provides matching contributions to families, providing further incentives for families to save;
- adopting California's "ReadyReturn" program, which would greatly simplify tax compliance for the great majority of Americans who do not itemize their taxes;
- considering the establishment of a Comprehensive Family Tax Credit which would pool together the many different policies that currently support lower income, working families;
- creating a single, consolidated Jobs Tax Credit to create jobs in high poverty areas;
- providing tax credits to employers and financial institutions that match savings of low-income employees and consumers;
- increasing 410(k) participation by encouraging companies to auto-enroll employees; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that free tax preparation services be available to lower income working families and individuals, and that an extensive outreach campaign be undertaken to encourage eligible families to take advantage of them.

PROVIDING FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL

WHEREAS, sweeping changes are posing new challenges to the upward mobility of workers into the middle class, as well as to American prosperity more generally; and

WHEREAS, more than 37 million people in the U.S. are officially poor today despite the fact that one-half of poor families are now working; and

WHEREAS, to successfully boost economic opportunity and grow the middle class, the U.S. must broaden investments in poverty policy from their focus on helping yesterday's workers to boosting the prospects of more of tomorrow's workers; and

WHEREAS, this approach gives lower income Americans the tools to help themselves, positions the government to achieve long-term savings as the need for today's poverty-related programs declines, and - most importantly - takes advantage of some of the key opportunities to reduce poverty that have been created by the sweeping changes of our time; and

WHEREAS, today, more than 45 percent of public school students tested in kindergarten and middle school fail to achieve age-appropriate proficiency in reading and mathematics, and only 35 percent of our urban middle school students achieve proficiency in math; and

WHEREAS, lower income children consistently perform worse in achievement tests in both reading and mathematics than higher income children, and they make up a disproportionately large share of those who drop out, doing so at twice the overall rate; and

WHEREAS, only one-half of lower income children even begin college, compared with more than 75 percent of higher income children; and

WHEREAS, the more success a child achieves in school, the less likely he or she is to live in poverty as an adult, and the poverty rate of high school dropouts is three times that of those who graduate; and

WHEREAS, one of every four American children drops out of high school before graduating, and the Council of the Great City Schools reports that in major cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Dallas, fewer than one-half of entering ninth graders graduate high school within four years; and

WHEREAS, as a result millions of young Americans reach adulthood with dramatically lower chances for economic success, as the overwhelming majority of those who drop out spend much of their lives on the margins of the economy; and

WHEREAS, educational attainment is the best predictor of economic success for an adult, and research shows that children who enter K-12 schools with no previous classroom time are less prepared to learn than children who attend preschool programs; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that investment in early childhood development programs brings a real (inflation adjusted) public return of 12 percent and a real total return, public and private, of 16 percent; and

WHEREAS, early childhood education benefits taxpayers through reduced need for welfare assistance, increased income tax revenue, less burden on the criminal justice system, and fewer children needing remedial education services; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that children who do not receive an early education are more likely to struggle as young adults and as adults, score more poorly on achievement tests, have children as teenagers, engage in criminal activity, and face chronic unemployment; and

WHEREAS, a recent study indicates that governmental investment in high quality, universal preschool could add more than \$2 trillion to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2080; and

WHEREAS, Head Start successfully provides early education and wrap-around services to needy youth and their families who hope to move into the middle-class, but the current federal investment in the program serves only 60 percent of eligible three- and four-year-olds; and

WHEREAS, access to preschool and early education will help make the United States more globally competitive and secure in its future; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Conference of Mayors have previously adopted resolutions supporting investment in early childhood education and preschool,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal and state governments to work with local governments to provide universal and standards-based preschool and early education to all families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all regulated early care and education program settings be included in this universal preschool and early education system if they can demonstrate that they meet local, state, and federal quality standards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors urges that in addition to expanding access to quality preschool programs, the hours of service of these programs be extended to accommodate the schedules of working families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors encourages the continued support of the Head Start program, which provides additional services for families in need above and beyond preschool education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the federal government provide additional funding for Head Start to support a full-day option and raise the income threshold for Head Start eligibility.

PROVIDING FEDERAL AND STATE SUPPORT FOR CAREER ACADEMIES

WHEREAS, sweeping changes are posing new challenges to the upward mobility of workers into the middle class, as well as to American prosperity more generally; and

WHEREAS, more than 37 million people in the U.S. are officially poor today despite the fact that one-half of poor families are now working; and

WHEREAS, to successfully boost economic opportunity and grow the middle class, the U.S. must broaden investments in poverty policy from their focus on helping yesterday's workers to boosting the prospects of more of tomorrow's workers; and

WHEREAS, this approach gives lower income Americans the tools to help themselves, positions the government to achieve long-term savings as the need for today's poverty-related programs declines, and - most importantly - takes advantage of some of the key opportunities to reduce poverty that have been created by the sweeping changes of our time; and

WHEREAS, today, more than 45 percent of public school students tested in kindergarten and middle school fail to achieve age appropriate proficiency in reading and mathematics, and only 35 percent of our urban middle school students achieve proficiency in math; and

WHEREAS, lower income children consistently perform worse in achievement tests in both reading and mathematics than higher income children, and they make up a disproportionately large share of those who drop out, doing so at twice the overall rate; and

WHEREAS, only one-half of lower income children even begin college, compared with more than 75 percent of higher income children; and

WHEREAS, the more success a child achieves in school, the less likely he or she is to live in poverty as an adult, and the poverty rate of high school dropouts is three times that of those who graduate; and

WHEREAS, one of every four American children drops out of high school before graduating, and the Council of the Great City Schools reports that in major cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Dallas, fewer than one-half of entering ninth graders graduate high school within four years; and

WHEREAS, this adds up to millions of young Americans who reach adulthood with dramatically lower chances for economic success, as the overwhelming majority of those who drop out spend much of their lives on the margins of the economy; and

WHEREAS, mainstream high school education, with its focus on college preparation, does not speak to the aspirations or plans of millions of students; and

WHEREAS, the school-wide career academies model for K-12 education, by contrast, does address some of these goals by placing greater focus on preparation for jobs and careers, emphasizing career exploration through vocationally oriented instruction in fields ranging from graphic design and information technology to healthcare and teaching; and

WHEREAS, career academies typically serve between 150 and 200 high school students, combining traditional curricula with career oriented training that is designed to better prepare students to move into the labor force; and

WHEREAS, high-performing career academies maintain partnerships with regional employers both to make students aware of their career options and provide work-based internships and other learning opportunities; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that students - especially young men - who matriculate through a career academy fare better after high school than those of similar circumstances who do not; and

WHEREAS, one recent study found that earnings for participants were higher by an average of \$212 per month than for youth who did not participate, an 18 percent difference in annual compensation; and

WHEREAS, the benefits of the career academy approach go beyond earnings; and

WHEREAS, program participants have shown higher rates of both high school completion and postsecondary enrollment than the national average; and

WHEREAS, employers also realize value by helping to inform the school curricula in their communities, better preparing the next generation of workers for jobs in their businesses; and

WHEREAS, current socio-economic trends are creating opportunities for career-track work that pays family-supporting wages but does not require a four-year college degree; and

WHEREAS, private as well as public sector employers are willing and able to train and then hire youth for career opportunities in work that offers family-supporting wages; and

WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors has previously adopted resolutions which call for the creation of, and investment in, career academies and similar educational models,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges federal, state and local governments to work together with private sector stakeholders to invest in expanding access to career exploration and preparation through career academies and other strategies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference of Mayors believes that schools should conform to well-tested standards of practice, and establish clear guidelines for evaluation of program effectiveness, including benchmarks for college and career success and student achievement.

SUPPORTING LIFETIME LEARNING SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

WHEREAS, sweeping changes are posing new challenges to the upward mobility of workers into the middle class, as well as to American prosperity more generally; and

WHEREAS, more than 37 million people in the U.S. are officially poor today despite the fact that one-half of poor families are now working; and

WHEREAS, to successfully boost economic opportunity and grow the middle class, the U.S. must broaden investments in poverty policy from their focus on helping yesterday's workers to boosting the prospects of more of tomorrow's workers; and

WHEREAS, this approach gives lower income Americans the tools to help themselves, positions the government to achieve long-term savings as the need for today's poverty-related programs declines, and - most importantly - takes advantage of some of the key opportunities to reduce poverty that have been created by the sweeping changes of our time; and

WHEREAS, globalizing trade and commerce has spurred demand for highly skilled labor and accountability in our educational system; and

WHEREAS, U.S. employers place a much higher premium on educational attainment and high-value job skills than in the past; and

WHEREAS, already, more than 60 percent of human resource managers express concern about the availability of skilled workers, reflected in part by the fact that the average time needed to fill a vacant position has increased from 37 to 51 days; and

WHEREAS, our nation faces the prospect of acute skills shortages; and

WHEREAS, three-quarters of new job growth will require some training and education beyond high school; and

WHEREAS, between 2000 and 2020, the number of workers with at least some college education is projected to increase by just four percent, while by contrast, between 1980 and 2000, this number rose by nearly 20 percent; and

WHEREAS, statistics like these have labor market experts very concerned that we are facing the prospect of a "skills gap" in the U.S. workforce demonstrated by an estimate of a U.S. shortfall of 14 million workers for skilled jobs by 2020, as job demands continue to rise but the education level of the workforce remains static; and

WHEREAS, the nation's current tools to address these shortages are too ineffective and inefficient to address this critical need and chief among these shortcomings, a college education is increasingly unaffordable to a large portion of the public; and

WHEREAS, since 1980, the inflation-adjusted cost of tuition at a four-year public college has increased by more than 190 percent; during that same time, median family income increased by only about 18 percent; and

WHEREAS, the result is a class bias in educational attainment: as of 2005, only 19 percent of working-age adults with incomes below the median income had earned a college credential compared with more than 46 percent of higher income adults; and

WHEREAS, high school graduates trying to pay for college currently turn to an array of credit and subsidies provided by the federal and state governments and private institutions, and while aid from these sources has increased, borrowing to pay for college is not a viable long-term solution because the debt payments will eventually be cost-prohibitive for many graduates; and

WHEREAS, already students from lower income families are finding they cannot afford college because costs have increased so much faster than the caps for federal subsidies such as Pell Grants; and

WHEREAS, only one-half of lower income children even begin college, compared with more than 75 percent of higher income children; and

WHEREAS, the more success a child achieves in school, the less likely he or she is to live in poverty as an adult. The poverty rate of high-school dropouts, for instance, is three times that of those who graduate; and

WHEREAS, one of every four American children drops out of high school before graduating; and

WHEREAS, this adds up to millions of young Americans who reach adulthood with dramatically lower chances for economic success; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of those who drop out spend much of their lives on the margins of the economy; and

WHEREAS, educational attainment is the best predictor of economic success as an adult; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Conference of Mayors has previously adopted resolutions supporting increased access to secondary education and adult skills training,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The United States Conference of Mayors urges the federal government to open a savings account for every child born in this country, depositing up to \$500 at the child's birth and providing an annual income-indexed match of up to \$500 for deposits made by family and third parties, until the child's 18th birthday; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in order to create a powerful new incentive to complete high school, account holders will not be able to access these accounts until they graduate, thereby helping to lower the dropout rate, which is higher than 50 percent in some cities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, funds can be used only for higher education or career training; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, funds withdrawn from this account should not be taxed.