

To: the Clerk of the Commerce Committee

From: Jorge Perez, Chair, Board of Directors, New Haven Works and Mary Reynolds, Interim Executive Director, New Haven Works

Re: Written Testimony for the public hearing on SB-535, AAC FUNDING FOR THE NEW HAVEN WORKS PROGRAM

Date: February 14, 2013

New Haven Works is an independent nonprofit organization—a collaboration between business, labor, local government, and community and institutional partners—that seeks to grow the local economy and improve economic stability in New Haven communities by providing employers with a trained and qualified workforce and connecting residents to good jobs. New Haven Works began in 2012 as a project of the New Haven Board of Alderman in response to community demands for local attention to the issue of unemployment and underemployment, and was developed by a Jobs Pipeline Working Group. The Working Group included representative from New Haven's community, youth, and unemployed, along with representatives from employers and businesses, labor, city officials, the Board of Aldermen, and the workforce system. After four months of discussions, research, expert testimonies, and public hearings, the Working Group submitted a comprehensive proposal for the creation of "New Haven Works."

New Haven Works serves unemployed and underemployed local residents. After March 1, our doors will be open to anyone who is 18 or over, has a GED or high school diploma and can prove local residency and work eligibility. Once fully funded and operational, New Haven Works will also serve local youth (those under 18) through internship and mentorship programs, summer job training and job matching, and tutoring programs. New Haven Works aims to place 1000 New Haven residents into employment over the next four years.

New Haven is the home of more than 10,000 un- and under-employed individuals, many of whom face multiple obstacles to employment. It is also the home to approximately 80,000 jobs, many of which are large employers with an interest in improving the local economy by developing a trained workforce, and reducing unemployment, crime, and poverty. The national unemployment rate is 7.9% (October 2012), while New Haven's unemployment rate is 12.2% (September 2012), with over 7,000 residents without work, with an additional 6,000 underemployed. Yet, the New Haven labor market area added jobs in 2012 and continues to grow. Even in this economy, employers often cannot fill job vacancies and, despite the availability of funding for workforce training and development, residents face multiple obstacles to employment. By matching a skilled workforce to available jobs for local and regional businesses, **New Haven Works** will be an asset to economic development for New Haven and the region and to stable neighborhoods for the residents and their families.

Although a variety of training programs and support services exist, New Haven needs a program of its own to address gaps in the existing workforce system, directly engage partner employers, provide individualized case management, and tackle the issue on a very local level. New Haven Works brings together business, labor, government, community organizations, major institutions, and service providers to identify designated "New Haven Works" job and OJT opportunities, find quality training programs, and prescreen and prepare local job candidates for careers in regional growth industries. Each month, the major employers in New Haven receive thousands of applications for only hundreds of jobs (between our partner employers there are currently approximately 350 jobs posted for an average of 8,000 submitted resumes). In this economic climate, qualified New Haven residents need the additional resource of a New Haven Works referral to have a chance for an interview.

New Haven Works is innovative because:

- Employers and the business community were equal creators of the design, structure and process, working alongside government, labor, service providers, and community representatives.
- It will develop a pre-screened, referred applicant pool by connecting qualified participants with the support services and training programs necessary to match the skills needed by local growth industries and other employers. In turn, employers can choose to provide internships and apprenticeships and help develop curricula.
- It will ensure job placement and retention by linking the under-employed and unemployed to good, entry-level jobs and by focusing on individualized case work for qualified participants from their New Haven Works Orientation to their successful retention in a new job.

New Haven Works has secured support and funding from Yale University, Yale New Haven Hospital, UIL Holdings, the Chamber of Commerce of Greater New Haven, UNITE HERE, United Way of Greater New Haven, and the City of New Haven, as well as grants from the Bank of America and the Berger Marks Foundation.

We urge you to support SB-535, AAC FUNDING FOR THE NEW HAVEN WORKS PROGRAM. We believe that New Haven Works can address the chronic structure of unemployment in New Haven, shift more unemployed into permanent jobs, and encourage economic development in Southern Connecticut.