New Haven Works Board of Directors

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Mary Reynolds, Executive Director

Statement for Appropriations Committee Public Hearing March 2, 2015

Regarding HB 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ending June thirtieth, 2017, and Making Appropriations therefor and Other provisions related to Revenue.

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and other members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Reynolds, and I am the Executive Director of New Haven Works. New Haven Works is the result of a grassroots public mandate to address a jobs crisis in the city of New Haven, where in some neighborhoods 40% of the residents were un- or under-employed, despite the fact that our core industries—particularly healthcare and education—were expanding. It was the culmination of a two-year multi-stakeholder process, involving public hearings, a collaboration between the public and private sectors, and union, community, and business groups, to move more residents into good jobs and provide job-ready applicants for local employers. Recent studies and reports show that the number of good jobs in New Haven is growing, but the unemployment and under-employment rates among black and Latino residents, in particular, remains between 15% and 20%.

We opened our doors in June 2013, and in the past 18 months, we have recruited more than 20 partner employers, including the largest in the region—Yale University, Yale-New Haven Hospital, City of New Haven, UIL Holdings and Southern Connecticut State University. More than 100 other employers have also used our services to hire city residents. With the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Vice-Presidents from Yale and Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Mayor as active Board members, we have established a non-profit with real employer buy-in.

Since we opened, we have placed 523 city residents (including over 100 at Yale University, one of the region's most competitive employers) into jobs ranging from entry-level positions to high skilled employment paying more than $20 per hour. Our successful placements come from every neighborhood in the city, but are overwhelmingly people of color (13% are white, 87% are non-white). In addition, 17% are former offenders. New Haven Works is the missing ingredient between employers looking to hire qualified candidates and talented city residents looking for good jobs. Our goals are results-driven, and by results we mean not just people serviced or trained or processed, but people placed in good jobs.

This success has been possible because of the $450,000 annual funding stream made available to New Haven Works in the State Budget, which is 40% of our current budget. In addition, we have raised over $1.3 million from employers and private foundations. Although we have secured other grants and in-kind donations, we are a young organization and are in the early stages of diversifying our funding sources.

This is a time of great opportunity—New Haven's major employers are expanding and $1 billion of construction projects are underway or about to break ground. New Haven Works has an applicant pool of over 500 pre-screened ready-to-work residents who have the skills needed in these growth industries, as well as a waiting list of over 1000 people. Our track record and ongoing development of employer partners suggests that with continued state support, all of these people have reason to be hopeful. Without our funding, the region's economic gains will not improve the lives of people in New Haven or the long-term economic stability of the city. This is a program that works—It works for city residents and it works for regional businesses.