

Meeting Minutes

JUNE 10, 2020 3:30 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

TELECONFERENCE CALL (DUE TO CORONAVIRUS)

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MEMBERS PRESENT

Louis Dubin (Chair)
Chris Sachse (Vice Chair)
Sam Abed
Carol Beatty
Gary Bockrath
Jennifer Bodensiek
Andrea Chapdelaine
Veronica A. Cool
Michelle Day
Wanda Smith Gispert
Robert L. Green
Steve Groenke
Kevin D. Heffner
Stacey Herman
Cheryl Kagan
Rona E. Kramer
Andrew B. Larson
Larry Letow
Carl Livesay
Amie Long
Roya Mohadjer
Stephen K. Neal
Alexander Núñez
Lourdes R. Padilla
Charles Ramos
Tiffany P. Robinson
Edward C. Rothstein, Col. Ret.
Kelly M. Schulz
James A. Sears
Gerald "Jerry" Shapiro
Leslie R. Simmons
William E. Simons
Michelle B. Smith
Charles T. Wetherington

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mick Arnold
Vanessa Atterbeary
John D. Barber, Jr.
Alice Blayne-Allard
Gavin Buckley
Katarina Ennerfelt
James D. Fielder
Sandra Kurtinitis
Gary Murdock
Chad Nagel
George W. Owings, III
Lisa Rusyniak
Karen Salmon
Marty Schwartz

GWDB STAFF

Mike DiGiacomo
Darla Henson
Ken Lemberg
Molly Mesnard

GUESTS *

Charlotten Ahearn
Bob Aydukovic
Rachael Barrett
Sarah Beardsley
Tiara Booker-Dwyer
Emily Bradchaw
Todd Cagwin
Dwight Carr
Rich Cerkovnik
Natalie Clements
Gary Cohen
Kim Cohen
Eric Colchamiro
Noel Damron
Lloyd Day
Scott Dennis
Mark Drury
Judith Emmel
Bruce England
John Feaster
Ellen Flowers-Fields
Lauren Gilwee
Jamie Gunnell
Cynthia Gurne
Kimberly Hahr
Alysia Henson
Portia Hurtt
Gus Inama
Kenneth Jessup
Danell Johnson
Netsanet Kibret
Heather Lageman
Kaitlin Marsden
Dylan McDonough

Michelle J. Wright
Charnetia V. Young

Ana Mejia
Bryan Moore
Steve Morrill
(Charles) Scott Nichols
Denise Nooe
Andi Overton
John Papagni
Fallon Pearre
Darlene Peregory
Janice Peete-Bey
Amy Petkovsek
Matthew Pyne
Ben Quintanilla
Alma Roberts
Ed Roberts
Christina Ross
Erin Roth
James Rzepkowski
Carmen Saenz
Jeff Samuels
Sarah Sheppard
Walter Simmons
Jim Smith
Bruce Spector
Steve Spector
Carolyn Sruggs
Lili Taylor
Walt Townshend
Adrea Turner
Jacqueline Turner
Justine Zawatski

*Please note that these guests RSVP'd for the teleconference call, but roll call was only taken for board members, so guest attendance could not be confirmed.

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME OPENING REMARKS:

The meeting started officially at 3:30 PM, June 10, 2020, via teleconference call. Chairman Louis Dubin provided welcome and opening remarks. He noted that the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) has been admirably helping meet the needs of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) team, particularly staff of GWDB. He also wanted to note the times of the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion, in light of recent events. Chairman Dubin turned over to Vice Chair Chris Sachse for his

comments on recent events. Vice Chair Chris Sachse indicated that activism and equity are important to the Board and that they have been listening to equity concerns for some time and will continue to do so.

PRESENTATIONS:

The meeting was turned over to Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz, who reminded the audience of the Governor's press conference later that afternoon at 5:00. Secretary Schulz shared that there is guidance available for opening industries, including those not yet opened, available online at open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness. The Commerce Department continues to work with industry growth groups that are recovering. Maryland is weathering the crisis better than some other states, in part due to federal government operations and contractors. Healthcare remains an important sector. There are significant efforts to help small businesses (\$50 million in loan guarantees at capacity). We have all been learning together, such as increased usage of electronic signatures. Secretary Schulz praised the Maryland Department of Labor for all its efforts.

Maryland Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson communicated that the State of Maryland and the Department of Labor were focused on how to handle the enormous UI workload. She thanked the GWDB staff and board members for their support through these UI efforts, including helping market the Work Sharing layoff aversion program toward the recovery with phasing in of employees coming back to work.

There are 1700 Maryland Department of Labor employees, and 400 of them are UI employees. Employees have been working day and night; this is a work in progress. There has been payment of over \$2.2 billion in regular and CARES Act dollars to recipients. With regard to weekly certification, there has been work on better communication with claimants. Over 480,000 claims have been processed. Since May 23, 2020, the adjudication rate has been reduced by 40 percent. With an automated solution, the remaining less than 70,000 claims are to be processed within a few days. The volume of claims has been totally unprecedented. There is a lot of work still to do. There have been 49,000 new claims this week.

The goal is increasingly getting people back to work. There is a layoff aversion fund, with \$7 million in state money and a \$3 million federal match. There has been money put into employers' hands, with over \$10 million going to 445 employers statewide (an average of 20 employees each), so smaller employers have been assisted. Jobs have been saved through the layoff aversion program, including via 38.2% minority owned businesses and multi-generational family businesses. We have funded remote access equipment and other resources. There was \$1.9 million awarded in Dislocated Worker Grants.

The Maryland Department of Labor supports local workforce development boards and looks at every possible grant opportunity from the federal government; staff have been writing additional grant applications. Federal benefits are complicated to administer, and the goal is to pay workers as soon as feasible appropriately in a non-fraudulent way. Maryland has a duty to maintain the integrity of its UI program, while minimizing fraudulent claims. We continue to look at best practices. Other states are struggling more in these matters. There is the concern that in receiving \$600 per week federally (until July) that some workers may stay home, even though their employers have started calling them back to work. Last week over 600 employers asked workers to return to work. If employees don't return to

work, then this triggers UI ineligibility on a claim. With the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), workers are expected to return to work when called to do so.

Chairman Dubin asked if any other Cabinet Secretaries had any COVID updates. Secretary Rona Kramer of the Department of Aging reported a high increase in demand for home delivered meals by adults – about a 500% increase. The Department has received some CARES Act funding and has asked for over \$5 million toward purchase of food from small local restaurants, aiding in economic development efforts. Many constituents have been closed in their homes and won't be taking part in the reopening of restaurants.

Secretary Lourdes Padilla of the Department of Human Services reported providing for different food banks in conjunction with the Department of Education, with meals for students. She has challenged her staff to be innovative and responsive in operations.

Secretary Robert Green of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services referenced the need to reimagine their work dealing dually with education and workforce development in their efforts to prepare people to go home.

GWDB Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo spoke more about the Work Sharing program, a partnership between the UI system and GWDB to support UI's efforts for this terrific layoff aversion and reopening and recovery program. The GWDB has been working on building materials and outreach efforts since we are already engaged with the business community. Mr. DiGiacomo turned the meeting over to Bryan Moore, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Division of Unemployment Insurance.

The Work Sharing program, in terms of outreach and promotion, is intended to help businesses return to working operations. As a layoff aversion program, in lieu of layoffs, the number of hours for employees working gets reduced. For example, if work hours must get cut back, and employees work 32 versus 40 hours during a given work week, the worker will receive 20 percent of his/her salary (\$86 per week) in unemployment compensation to make up for lost wages (example: 20 percent of \$430 per week). There are different phases of employers reopening, some returning with reduced number of hours worked. In addition to the layoff aversion dollar funding for workers, they are often eligible to receive \$600 per week, until July 25, as alluded to earlier. Until 12/31/20, the State of Maryland receives reimbursement to its trust fund for employees receiving UI benefits under Work Sharing. GWDB staff will help promote this program, to be marketed to additional businesses. The program will also be communicated through local workforce development boards. The Maryland Work Sharing program covers 20 to 50 percent of reduction in worker hours. The application has been made simpler. Federal rules could allow for 10 to not more than 60 percent reduction in worker hours. Pre-COVID, since 1984, Work Sharing already existed in Maryland, but was not heavily utilized. Now, with the economic downturn, it is utilized all over Maryland, and few employer applications get denied.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Chuck Wetherington, GWDB member and head of BTE Technology, Inc., to share a few words about his experience with Work Sharing. Mr. Wetherington applied for Work Sharing when his company had a 25 percent reduction in work hours. This program was pivotal in keeping talent, where employees need to have specific experiences and work requirements, such as software development, in the making of medical devices. On weekly corporate Zoom calls, employees

commended the Work Sharing program – it was well received. Mr. Wetherington will try to help promote the program.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Michelle Day, President of the Maryland Workforce Association, made up of the 12 local workforce directors in Maryland, to provide updates on their COVID recovery efforts. Since March, all local areas have continued their efforts, via the following servicing: emails; fielding calls; indicating how to access services; downloading training services; utilizing Zoom and Facebook Live; helping with online training and career services; mental health programming; reviewing resumes; and virtual Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) registering and programming. In lieu of in-person training, there are free on-line training and digital literacy tools. Libraries are utilized. Business services are going on. With regard to summer job programs, a version is being planned for youth with barriers. There will be virtual and paid work experience through telework. In short, there is no disruption of services, even though they have gone remote/virtual. There is gearing up to support reemployment.

Chairman Dubin reminded people that the local workforce development boards are essential for employers and job seekers.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced the newest GWDB member, Stacey Herman of the Kennedy Krieger Institute. In working with individuals with disabilities, and providing access to community resources and work opportunities, Ms. Herman leads the Neurodiversity of Work Institute and the Project Search program for Kennedy Krieger. She is pleased to be part of the GWDB.

MOTIONS:

Chairman Dubin asked for a motion to approve the March 18, 2020, meeting minutes. The motion was made and seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Mr. DiGiacomo made some updates and announcements. The GWDB 2019 Annual Report was released in the spring. Staff included a link in the meeting materials email. Board members will be provided with printed copies at our next in-person GWDB meeting, but in the interim, please feel free to read the report online and let us know of any questions you may have.

At the last GWDB meeting, Secretary Robinson spoke about legislation called the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, also known as the Kirwan Commission. This legislation passed the Senate and House during the abbreviated General Assembly session earlier this year. The Governor vetoed all legislation that would increase spending, including the Kirwan Commission, due to COVID-19. He noted in his veto letter that the economic fallout from this pandemic would make it impossible to fund any new programs, impose any new taxes, nor adopt any legislation having any significant fiscal impact, regardless of the merits of the legislation.

Incidentally, within the Kirwan Commission, there was a component establishing a Career and Technical Education (CTE) committee within the GWDB, with the purpose of building an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public school, institutions of postsecondary education, and the workforce. We will keep board members up to date with any new developments regarding this legislation when the General Assembly reconvenes next.

We had planned that our next GWDB meeting in September would be at the Live! Casino and Hotel, in conjunction with the Maryland Workforce Association's annual Raising the Bar conference. Given the circumstances, the 2020 conference has understandably been postponed. We will update board members and interested guests as we get closer to September about the logistics for the next board meeting.

VOTE:

There was then a roll call conducted of board members present and whether they affirmatively voted yes on the March meeting minutes. GWDB Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo conducted a roll call of board members present; a quorum was present.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Dubin reminded people of the Governor's press conference at 5:00 that afternoon and then asked for a motion to adjourn. This motion was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2020.

Submitted by:

Ken Lemberg