



*An Affiliate of the  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*  
820 First Street NE, Suite 750  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 408-1080 Fax (202) 408-8173  
[www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org)

**Testimony of Ilana Boivie, Senior Policy Analyst  
at the BCRA Public Oversight Roundtable Review of the District's Workforce  
Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified State Plan  
DC Council Committee on Business, Consumer, and Regulatory Affairs  
February 26, 2016**

Thank you Chairman Orange and members of the Committee on Business, Consumer, and Regulatory Affairs, for the opportunity to speak today. I am Ilana Boivie, Senior Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI promotes budget and policy choices to expand economic opportunity for DC residents and reduce income inequality in the District, through independent research and policy recommendations.

I am here today to testify on the recently-released draft of DC's WIOA State Plan. If implemented in a meaningful and strategic way, the plan could serve to expand and improve the workforce development system in the District, which is highly needed.

The plan itself describes the problem in detail. While DC's overall unemployment rate has fallen in recent years, unemployment is still a huge problem among certain populations. The unemployment rate among African-Americans is 17 percent, and among youth (aged 16-24), it is 23 percent. Nearly half of the unemployed have been out of work for 6 months or longer, and an astounding 83 percent of the long-term unemployed are African-American.<sup>1</sup>

Far too many city residents are not adequately equipped for DC's very competitive job market. Some 60,000 DC residents lack a high school credential,<sup>2</sup> and an additional 80,000 residents have a high school education, but no education or training credential beyond that.<sup>3</sup> The city's unemployment rate ranges from nearly 17 percent for those with just a high school degree to less than 3 percent for those with a college education.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, some 72 percent of workers in the District live outside of the city.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the city can and should be doing a better job educating and training its residents so that they have the skills they need to find quality employment within the District. The formation of a comprehensive WIOA state plan is a critical step in that direction.

I will focus my comments today on four areas:

- 1) Data measurement
- 2) Performance and accountability
- 3) Funding
- 4) Immediate next steps

**Data Measurement**

The draft plan describes in some detail a new data system, the Data Vault, that will be part of a universal intake, assessment, and referral system for all participants in job training and

adult education programs; track performance and outcomes; and link participants to programs and services across all government agencies.

If fully implemented as described in the plan, the Data Vault can play a critical role in improving the District’s workforce development system. It will serve to generally ensure an efficient process to assess and refer candidates to the programs that best fit their needs.

Regarding the launch of the Data Vault, however, some outstanding questions remain. For example:

- The plan notes that many different data systems are currently being used by many different agencies, yet it is unclear whether and how all of these data systems will be incorporated into the Data Vault.
- Also, information on individual outcomes should be included in the Data Vault, but it is unclear if this will be the case. If the goal is to include them, clear roles and responsibilities among agencies should be outlined in terms of following up with past participants to track outcomes.
- Finally, the public should be included in developing and monitoring the progress of the Data Vault, but the plan does not outline a strategy for engagement.

### **Performance and Accountability**

The plan mentions several performance tracking activities. These include monthly meetings focused on implementation among heads of the key agencies involved in workforce development; an annual CAPSTAT session on the workforce development system; a process for streamlined customer feedback; and an overall system evaluation after the second year.

These are important steps to foster accountability throughout the implementation process. Moving forward, advocates will be interested in hearing more details on these activities. For example:

- How will customer feedback be collected and reviewed? Will the information gathered be made publicly available?
- How will DC government share with the public the important lessons learned or action steps coming out of the monthly meetings and CAPSTAT?
- Will stakeholders—including participants, employers, and providers—be able to provide feedback for the two-year evaluation review?

### **Funding**

Many new initiatives discussed in the plan will require additional funding. For example, the plan notes that “existing capacity [at OSSE’s adult education programs] is insufficient to meet the District’s needs.” Also, adult education costs per participant are likely to increase, as Adult Family Education programs will be required to integrate education with job training. The plan also calls for increasing the number of “earn while you learn” job training programs, and scaling up and expanding capacity at UDC.

The plan does not, however, specify any budgetary considerations or priorities—from the additional costs of these new initiatives, to a specific plan for funding them. It will be important for government officials to assess – with public input – how much additional

money will be required to meet various goals, and to set priorities for which activities and programs are most important to funded in the near future.

### **Immediate Next Steps**

Finally, moving forward, it will be critical to ensure consistent progress on implementation. While many of the plan's reforms will be relatively long-term propositions, they can also be broken out to incorporate more immediately-realized short-term goals and activities.

For each of these long-term reforms, government officials should identify specific, quantifiable next steps for 2016 and 2017, with clear deliverables and deadlines in place. Progress on these items can then be assessed at the monthly meetings among agency heads, to ensure that implementation continues to progress.

In summary, the WIOA state plan sets a clear mission and vision for the city's workforce development system, and, if implemented wisely, presents an opportunity to finally develop a comprehensive education and training system within the District of Columbia, which, now more than ever, is critically needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

---

<sup>1</sup> District of Columbia Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Draft Unified State Plan, 2016-2020.

<sup>2</sup> District of Columbia Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Draft Unified State Plan, 2016-2020.

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey. "Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over." 2009-2013 Five Year Estimates.

<sup>4</sup> District of Columbia Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Draft Unified State Plan, 2016-2020.

<sup>5</sup> District of Columbia Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Draft Unified State Plan, 2016-2020.