The CT Low Wage Employer Advisory Board Meeting
September 25, 2018 – 3:00 PM
The Connecticut Department of Labor
200 Folly Brook Boulevard
Wethersfield, Connecticut
Conference Rooms A&B

Members present: Co-Chair Stanley McMillen, Co-Chair Manisha Srivastava, Michael Seid, Mike Bartley, Merle Berke-Schlessel and Eva Bermudez-Zimmerman. A majority of members (6) needed to reach a quorum was met.

Members absent: Monica Morneau, Paul Lavoie, Deborah Schwartz and Merrill Gay and Eddie Stephens.

Other participants: Deborah Chernoff (representing Board Member Deborah Schwartz), and Chris Caruso from the CT Department of Labor.

Call to Order: Co-Chairs McMillen and Srivastava convened the meeting at 3:25 PM by thanking those in attendance for helping to make a quorum.

Approval of the July 30, 2018 Board meeting “draft” minutes: – Co-Chair McMillen made a motion to add the July 30, 2018 Board meeting “draft” minutes to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Co-Chair Manisha Srivastava. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. With the item added to the agenda, a motion was made to approve the draft minutes from the July 30, 2018 Board meeting by Co-Chair McMillen and seconded by Co-Chair Manisha Srivastava. Those voting in favor were; McMillen, Srivastava, Mike Bartley and Michael Seid. There were no votes in opposition, and Berke-Schlessel and Bermudez-Zimmerman abstained.
**Status of Inactive Board Members:** Co-Chairs McMillen and Srivastava led a discussion on the status of inactive members. Deborah Chernoff informed the Board that before the next meeting she will have retired and Deborah Schwartz will be returning. Chris Caruso reported on his efforts to replace those Board members who have resigned. Before the Governor can replace Susan Coleman, a letter of resignation is needed. Chris has reached out to Susan for such a letter. He is also trying to reach Eddie Stephens about a resignation letter as well. Chris also spoke about his efforts to have Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney appoint a replacement for James Bhandary-Alexander who resigned last year.

**Report:** Co-Chair McMillen led the discussion on what has the Board learned since its last meeting on benefit cliffs and cradle to career barriers to employment, and where the Board may go from here. Co-Chair McMillen spoke about the newly created state data advisory board and other projects and new organizations that he feels are important to the Board’s work. Some members spoke about state agency silos that minimize effective service to the public. Some felt that the state agencies are not run as effectively as the private business sector. There was discussion around barriers such as housing, daycare, transportation. Merle Berke-Schlessel spoke about how some of the barriers affecting low-wage individuals are created by systems within state agencies that do not address individual problems and impact thousands of people. She explained that the United Way has been addressing these issues by speaking directly to commissioners from specific state agencies.

In addition, Co-Chairs McMillen and Srivastava mentioned the work underway in the Office of Early Childhood to undertake a study of the benefits curve in CT as it pertains to early child education access. Several states have performed studies of their benefits cliffs. Given that a formal study is being commissioned, the Co-Chairs felt the board should await those results rather than studying the issue on its own.
**Board value:** The Co-Chairs questioned the value of the Board’s efforts if other commissions and boards are doing similar work. There was some discussion on writing a letter to the Legislature seeking clarity and purpose of the Board and perhaps seek a moratorium until such request is granted. Co-Chair McMillen read the six areas of the statue that created the Board. Eva Bermudez-Zimmerman spoke about how fragmented state services appear to the public. She has done work and research on the fragmentation and how it directly affects people in need of state resources. It was agreed that the value of the Board is to focus its efforts on connecting people to state services through technology. How can their lives be improved by leveraging technology to connect them to state resources? Eva Bermudez and Merle Berke-Schlessel would provide information on the work they are doing and familiar with at the next meeting. Other Board members will look for best practices in leveraging technology to connect low-wage people with state and federal resources to help them improve their lives.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Co-Chair McMillen to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Co-Chair Srivastava and passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 5:00 PM.

**Next Board Meeting:** The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at 3:00 PM at the Connecticut Department of Labor, 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield in Conference Rooms A&B.