

**CLASP/CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY**

**March 19, 2015**

**3:00 p.m. ET**

OPERATOR: Good day, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's CLASP conference call.

All lines have been placed on a listen only mode. If you should require assistance throughout the conference, please press star-zero on your telephone keypad to reach a live operator.

At this time, it is my pleasure to turn the floor over to our host, Jodie Levin-Epstein of Center for Law and Social Policy. Ma'am, the floor is yours.

JODIE LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Thank you very much and welcome everyone to the kick off audio conference in CLASP series on job schedules in 2015. Today's audio conference is job schedules and quality in workforce development. Job quality matters, job quality includes wages, paid leaves, scheduling employee input and other job characteristics.

Job quality though is not about perks but about job retention, take paid leave, for example. One in seven low wage workers reports a job was lost in the past four years because they were sick or needed to care for a family member. Job quality can mean job retention. Scheduling is in the news.

Last year the schedules that work act was introduced in Congress. And in San Francisco, the works is Bill of Rights and then earlier, right to request legislation were enacted. Already in 2015 scheduling bills have been introduced in California, Connecticut, and yes, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon and the work clopening, well known to those workers past with both closing and with opening a business has become more familiar to the general public since the New York Times, chronicled the experiences of Jannette Navarro, a Starbucks barista whose clopening and other scheduling challenges cost her, among other things, to become homeless.

Today's audio conference includes an audience who resides in the worlds of workforce development and those who live in the job quality scheduling community. The goal here is plain talk, not alphabet soup, so these worlds can communicate and see the potential interactions that we both have.

My guess are from the world of workforce development. In this world and here at CLASP 2014 was over a decade and coming, the primary national workforce development program was finally re-authorized, finally known as WIOA, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. CLASP and colleague organizations have useful overview resources on WIOA and all registrants were sent some links along with their (call in) instructions.

Today, we're going to zero in on job quality and workforce. You also ought to note that the workforce world has a northern hemisphere and a southern hemisphere, one propelled by government investment, the other by private sector investment. We're going to both – visit both hemispheres today.

My guests today are David Socolow of CLASP, hey, David.

DAVID SOCOLOW: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And Katy Gaul-Stigge with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development in New York City. Hi, Katy.

KATY GAUL-STIGGE: Hi, Jodie.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And from the Aspen Institute we have John Colborn. Welcome, John.

JOHN COLBORN: Hi. Glad to be here.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. David, you're up first. David, quick question, did the old workforce development law in any way either encourage or specifically require that people be placed in the quality jobs?

SOCOLOW: No. The old law, the Workforce Investment Act which was passed in 1998 really took a work first approach. It was placing individuals in any jobs as soon as possible, not taking job quality into consideration, and to some extent, that reflected the late 1990's. We had a full employment economy, it was 4 percent unemployment and employers couldn't find workers, so it was to get workers into any job, job quality wasn't a factor.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. So, now we have this new law, finally known as WIOA, does that change this up in any which way?

SOCOLOW: It does. As you mentioned, last year WIOA was passed. It's the first overhaul of this program as I've said in 16 years since 1998. It encourages, it does not mandate but it does encourage the use of criteria for the workforce system to figure out which employers to engage in partnerships which at least offers an opportunity for the workforce system to focus on job quality.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, can you fill us in a little bit more around this word "encouragement?" What – spell out what you were – what's in the bill in terms of how folks should really view this encouragement provision?

SOCOLOW: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Or is it a provision or is it several places? Go ahead.

SOCLOW: It's in several places but it's a series of invitations to use WIOA training funds, federal dollars for job training in a strategic way. So, first of all, most importantly, the law encourages several kinds of work based training models. Those are where individuals are simultaneously employed at a job and also getting training at the same time so that they can earn while they learn.

Just as examples to the places to go looking in the law, there's – it's specific encouragement to devote up to 20 percent of the job training federal dollars for incumbent worker training grants to employers, up to 10 percent for transitional job placement program, and separately an increase in the opportunity to reimburse employers for on the job training place that's up to 75 percent of the employees wages can be paid for using this federal WIOA dollars.

And so, you know, those kinds of programs have existed before. What's new is that for the first time the law suggest in all of these opportunities that workforce agencies consider in awarding such grants to employers who trained newly hired workers or hire their or train their existing incumbent workers that they consider various criteria.

And specifically it's a determining eligibility of an employer to receive these kinds of grant funds to train their workers and they should take into account factors including wage and benefit levels of those employees, as well as the opportunities for other training and advancement offered by the employer.

So, as I've said, these kinds of criteria which are newly suggested and available is an opportunity to set criteria to award training grants only to higher (inaudible) employers, you know, who agree to meet community standards and adopting their HR policies and offering decent wages and benefit levels that's specifically mentioned in the law and investing and supporting their employees ongoing training, and advancement is also specifically cited in the law.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, that's great. And so, that basically an agency that wants to take this direction has a leg to stand on in terms of pointing to the legislation as encouraging all those different kinds of things that you were just referencing?

SOCLOW: Right, right. And it's absolutely an integral part of the overall goal of workforce agencies because workforce agencies see their vision and the law encourages, actually requires them to see their vision as helping develop their local labor market to achieve sustainable long term prosperity, and you know, job opportunities for individuals.

And so, job quality is an important part of the workforce system. It's not only for the, you know, reasons of fairness and concern about the workers themselves but also to advance the mission of helping to make it possible for workers to engage in continuous lifelong learning, and continue upgrading and updating their skills.

So, particularly the subject that you started with at the beginning of the conference with job scheduling, it fits directly into those kinds of criteria that you could set, and then in local area could set for employer training grants because if employees don't have – if employers don't offer their employees predictable schedules, it's much harder for them to pursue those other training and advancement opportunities that are mentioned in the law.

You know, it's a barrier (got), you know, this job scheduling issues can be a barrier for employees going to school for their own economic advancement balancing, you know, caregiving and other components of their life.

So, it's definitely, you know, when you think about the workforce system and its objectives of helping the labor market and all the businesses in their area encouraging lifelong learning, encouraging up scaling certainly make sense to use these training grants as an incentives by adding this criteria to incentives the work condition that help people go and get extra training and have time in their life to do that.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, a word to the audience, some of you already have been sending questions and I thank you, for those of you who wish to send in a question, and you can do that at any time, just send a note through your email to [audioconference@clasp](mailto:audioconference@clasp), C-L-A-S-P, .org and I'll receive your questions and read as many as we can get to, to our guests.

So, David you've just sort of really captured a lot of the why of the – and the importance of this issue and the opportunities through WIOA. Could you speak to this question that I imagine is on a lot of agency official's minds, those who have the responsibility for implementation? They may be wondering whether they can actually ask these issues of job quality and scheduling to their plate, shouldn't they instead just focus on what they're require to do in the new law and not add on what they're encouraged to do?

SOCLOW: Well, there is a lot of things in the new law that are real opportunities to build partnerships with employers. And I think that the local areas are excited about that opportunity and there may well be a lot of demand from different industries and different employers and different sectors that offered jobs in their community.

And so, I think that, again, if you're going to be taking advantage of the new freedom to use more of the federal workforce dollars for work based training, essentially partnerships with employers, it only stands to reason that you want to be looking at the types of employers that you want to work with. You've certainly have the option of setting up a first come and first serve strategy but that is not a strategic.

And so, I think that, again, thinking about its overall development at the labor market and thinking about the opportunity for the individuals in their area to have lifelong learning opportunities, you'd be putting a criteria that has reasonable job scheduling for instance as a condition for receiving an employer grant from the federal funded local areas is a sensible thing to do.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: I am going to jump in here because we have a question regarding the study that was cited about one in seven low age workers losing doing – due to scheduling issues and Brian Estes with the Insight Policy Research asks, “What the site is?” It’s from an Oxfam study that was done last year and we will send it out to all of the registrants.

So, if anyone else has that question, you will be getting the link as well. Again, everybody should be sending in their questions to CLASP at [audioconference@clasp.org](mailto:audioconference@clasp.org).

David, I’m going to do something a little fun here. I’d like to give you a chance to wear a couple of different hats and ask you how you promote job quality, including job scheduling through WIOA. We have been talking about it generally but I want you to be the kind of person I’m going to make you be.

So, first, you were a commissioner of labor, now this is really not a creative thing for you in terms of imagination because you actually have worn such a hat when you were – had your New Jersey days. So now, pretend though you still have that hat and you were in the position of managing WIOA, what steps would you take in terms of promoting job quality at that state level?

SOCLOW: Well, this is the – this is an important moment, the governors are required to submit new WIOA state plans as a result of the new law that passed last year and it really is an opportunity for a state leader to work to create incentives for job quality, that the plans have to be filed by the next March, and so the planning is really going on right now.

And so, you know, state workforce agency leaders should be working with their governor, with their state workforce, board and other stakeholders to try to get consensus and bridge the interest to put as poor requirement into those state plans, that there’d be state criteria for workforce grants to employers to support job quality.

You know, for instance, state plans could specify some model criteria for local areas and encourage the local areas to use them. They could also specify that local areas plans must identify which criteria they are using to apply in giving out those grants. And they could also, state labor department, state workforce agencies could be leveraging their state live reserve funds.

There is some of the WIOA federal funds that are in the hands of the state agency and the – at the direction of the governor and they could use that to encourage greater use of work based training and earn while you learn strategies, again so that low income and low skilled individuals can have a job and that allows them to work and pay their bills while they’re getting training.

And then, in – as a part of that increase focus on those kinds of partnerships with employers include job quality standards for which employers get those grants.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. Well, now you're moving from being commissioner of labor to the local (web) director, what would actions could you take or would you take as the director of the local (web)?

SOCLOW: Well, I would, yes, I know, absolutely, and the workforce innovation and opportunity act is delivered at the local level of the local and regional level and local workforce agencies and the workforce boards have a lot of employers that they engaged, the board are majority employer.

And they really should be talking to them about these kinds of strategies of transitional jobs and incumbent worker training and make explicit the link to job quality and the partnerships and how that ultimately help people rise up throughout their careers, through a better employment outcomes.

I mean, ultimately the way that the system is measured is earnings gains, people, you know, getting better jobs and people getting placed into jobs that they hold onto. And so, showing that job quality actually leaves the jobs that in fact stick at the – as I think you said at the top of the (call it) retention job scheduling practices, good scheduling practices, our job retention strategy.

Well, that's in the overall interest of this investment of dollars at the local level, you don't want to place people and jobs that they're not going to stay in. And so, I think that local workforce agency leaders know the economic that determine the industries that are actually hiring in their areas.

They're talking to the employers about what jobs are open and being hired for, what they ought to be investing in training. You know, there's a real focus on sending those training dollars to in demand jobs so that we're not training people for jobs that don't exist. But to the extent that the – what's in demand in the local area is what our lower paid jobs or entry level jobs, they should use this leverage that they have to encourage job quality basic standards in their community.

There has been several workforce, of course, in the past that has actually set forth specific criteria for the services that they offered to businesses targeting training grants to employers, for instance, that pay higher average hourly wages and at some local standard, provision of health benefits, promotion opportunities, skills training opportunities and other criteria.

So, its – it can be done effectively, it's been done in other criteria. And as I say, I think this is the opportune moment now for new plans to be written at the local level to say that we're going to give out more of these grants so the people can earn while they learn at the same time, and work with employers and add worker friendly job scheduling practices to the list of those criteria for those grants.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: David we have a question here from Rachel D with the Association for Workforce Asset Management. She asks, "Is there anything in the law that

encourages or offers training and education to managers on how they should use scheduling, time and attendance, leave and management technology better? Are you helping employers build quantifiable business cases for better schedules? What about doing an ROI, return on investment, analysis of better schedules?”

And Rachel says she’s having a great time already. So, we’re so glad Rachel. Thanks for sending in the question. And David, take it away. And I’m sure our other speakers as well may want to play with your question, Rachel. Go ahead, David.

SOCLOW: It’s a really interesting point. I mean, generally the focus on the job training dollars in the law that is for job training is really specifically for front line workers. That being said, there’s a whole category of funding called business services. One of which is this employer training but others can be helping businesses figure out how to manage their workforce.

And I think that to the extent that local one stop centers or American Job Centers, you know, the local workforce agencies are delivering business services, giving them some pointers and help in understanding retention strategies, including better scheduling, it’s absolutely something that could be added to that menu of what business services are in addition to the basic labor exchange helping them find the workers that they’re looking for.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We have a question here from (Marguerita McCisick) who’s with the Search Program, and she asks, “As a non-profit community action agency offering career development, how would I go about getting funding for OJT? And how can I get assistance with my training classes?”

I’m not exactly sure that this ties into job quality but maybe there is a direct link in as much as she is looking to train her trainees for higher quality jobs. David?

SOCLOW: Yes. I’m trying to connect to the question.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

SOCLOW: I think that, you know, I mean the on the job training that’s specifically envisioned is essentially a program in which is as I mentioned has this potential criteria to be added to it is where you work with the workforce agency works within an employer to agree to take a new hire and provide them on the job training for the first several months, often it’s for the first six months of working for the employer.

The employer pays wages and then the workforce funds are used to partially reimburse up to 75 percent of the cost of those wages, essentially to defray the extraordinary cost of start up on the job training. So, that’s what we, in the workforce, specifically refers to, the OJT contract...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes, yes.

SOCLOW: ... which are employer grants.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, great. David I hope we're going to have time at the end to get back to everybody in a more free for all conversations, it depends on how much these questions keep coming at us.

So, I'm going to turn to Katy right now. Katy guess what, it's almost your first anniversary. I bet you realize that...

GAUL-STIGGE: Absolutely.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... as head of the new Mayor's Office of workforce development, congratulations. Does anybody going to throw you a party?

GAUL-STIGGE: This seems like a party.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Love it, love it. So, you're there in New York City in charged with just a small task of revamping training and skills development and creating high value work experiences. And as your Mayor, New York City Mayor de Blasio has said, you're charged with the ways – finding ways to “engage employers to improve the stability and dignity of low wage work.”

This is an important task. So, we're glad you're having it and you're going to be celebrating your first year. Here is my first question for you Katy, “The jobs for New Yorkers taskforce that you convened made recommendations on how to accomplish this new vision, what's the big takeaway that you keep in mind each day as you direct the program?”

GAUL-STIGGE: Thanks for the question. I mean, it's really exciting because we have this jobs for New Yorkers taskforce where we brought employers and educators and advocates for low income New Yorkers, and we came up with three strategies. And as you're picking up the second one, it was improving job quality.

And I think it is exciting to have a workforce policy document state that job qualities are number two thing. The first one, of course, is building skills employers seek. The second one is improving job quality. It really – what I keep in mind is that we have to shift away from, as David was saying, a minimal focus on job quality or perhaps, you know, a lack of a focus on job quality where we either if employers don't know how to provide job quality we just let them figure out or we left low wage workers not accessing work supports or financial empowerment support that could improve their financial stability and therefore improve job quality as well.

So, we really keep in mind that that's the old dichotomy and that the new dichotomy that we want is that we want the city to recognize and do business with high road employers



that we want to work with small business, especially small businesses to improve the job quality...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

GAUL-STIGGE: ... and create more stability.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

GAUL-STIGGE: And that we want to educate employers and workers about income supports and maximizing their financial stability, you know, what went there in low wage work. Low wage work is a fact of our economy right now and certainly when we look at what's been growing nationally and in New York City after the recession, we see some strong growth in low wage work.

And I think there's been a lot of new fresh dialogue around this. And it's pointing out that while jobs are growing and then that's good for everyone, we want to make sure that we're also raise – having strategies to raise the floor and have a raise to the top for employers.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. So, Katy, the task for is called for three strategies and you've mentioned to two, one is around the job quality, and the one – another one, the number one, having employees or potential employees gain the skills that meet employer needs, and the third was improved system and policy coordination.

For this audio conference we're going to just zero...

GAUL-STIGGE: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... in on the job quality recommendations. And the report doesn't mince words in this area and I'm going to quote because it says about job quality, "That low pay", "Low paying positions in the retail and food service industries offer few benefits, irregular scheduling, and limited advancement potential. In short, these are jobs that fail to provide a pass to economic security"

Katy let's zero in on some of the specifics around the job quality recommendations. And I'm just going to throw them out at you and ask you to broadly give your take on what's most important in your mind to accomplish, and any news and updates about action steps that either taken on or, you know, just having the works by way of plans because I think that'll be very helpful for everybody to hear.

OK, so first, there's a recommendation to put job quality over quantity of placements. Your agency is urged, and again I find myself quoting from this document and I encourage everybody who registered, you got a link to this report, you know, it's a page turner if you're reading this. It's really quite awesome.

Your agency has urge to and here is the quote, “Reimburse workforce agencies on the basis of job quality instead of the quantity of job placements by aligning service providers under a system wide data infrastructure that measures job outcome such as full time work, wage growth, and job continuity.”

Your take on the priorities, any news Katy?

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, first, I appreciate, you know, your encouraging everyone to read it and we, you know, I really look forward to the feedback from the audience today. Let me just frame the problem. For many years each one of our workforce agencies, and again we’re a local area although we are New York City, 8 plus million strong of amazing citizens and workers and we want to make all of our workforce agencies use their own definitions and processes and data.

And this, you know, naturally leads to confusion for both users of the system who might want to access work and inability from a city perspective or the mayoral perspective to just track system wide data to best serve job seekers. Now, we know that outcome such as full time work or wage growth or job continuity are the ones that intuitively we want to see when we invest in workforce development.

So, we have to make sure that that’s really what we’re tracking. However, we have different – we have WIOA or WIA, we have (Kenneth), we might have senior works program. We have a variety of different programs that we all count underneath our workforce development umbrella. And so, what we’re trying to take on is to start a long term vision which currently is in implementation with our agencies and it calls for creating a unified database and allowing the city to make better use of wage reporting system which is available at the state through the New York City, sorry, the New York City Department of Labor.

This will allow us to really track and compare apples to apples. So, we need to make sure that different city agencies have the same definitions of what is full time work.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

GAUL-STIGGE: And that we can start helping to provide that support for them. This is going to be a longer range plan as you can – as anyone who is on the call who has worked with databases and multiple agencies, and state and city government can attest too. But we think it’s a really important one that’s going to be a key driver when we think about understanding the impacts.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Another recommendation called for setting a standard to recognize high road employers, how will the standard will use? Any news in this arena?

GAUL-STIGGE: Yes. Thank you, Jodie. We have great news to share on this one. It’s great timing, just last week our New York City economic development corporation launched best for New York City. This is a partnership with B lab, the business

certification organization to bring their best for the world competition which is the triple bottom line businesses right here at New York City.

So, we are the first city in the country to launch an initiative like this. We want to recognize those businesses who are embracing job quality for their employees and support businesses that may not yet have the resources or the skills or be able to be a best for New York City Company become one.

So, let me tell you a little bit about what it is. Best for New York City is a set of business tools and services design to inspire and equip New York City businesses to measure and improve their business practices. When we're looking at help in creating well-paying jobs, improving the quality of life and all (inaudible) while strengthening their bottom line.

This is leveraging B lab's impact assessment. B lab's impact assessment is the leading global tool for measuring, benchmarking and improving the economic and social impact of businesses such diversity and inclusion, compensation, benefits in governance. And it'll compare the businesses that take this assessment to more than 20,000 others, so there is a baseline to establish best practices.

The idea here is that business will be able to identify opportunities to improve their competitive position by improving in better practices. And in fact, in the launch of this, we were at a restaurant in Brooklyn that talked about how they have taken on themselves paying more, creating more vacation days for their workers because of the high cost to them of turnover.

And they are excited about being the best in New York City Company because they voluntarily took this on, because they know it's good for New York and they know it's good for their workers. And they are excited about getting this best for New York City feel. So, we really see this as a race to the top where we're really trying to encourage and get people excited and using their dollars to do business with businesses that do good.

We (inaudible)...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, will that...

GAUL-STIGGE: Oh, sorry.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: No, no, go ahead.

Katy Levin-Epstein: We have a pool of 500 businesses to participate by the end of this year.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes.

GAUL-STIGGE: So, this has just launched. We're partnering with our community and industry based organizations, our city agencies, our chambers of commerce's, our CBO's and our New York City economic development corporation will be continuing to conduct outreach efforts to all the different businesses to try to get to this number but we are really on it.

It's really a challenge to New York City businesses, both to recognize high road, as well as support businesses to become high road employers.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Right. And on this issue of supporting businesses to become high road which is part of the question that was asked earlier by one of the folks in our audience as well, is what you might be able to do and provide for some businesses to, you know, learn how to do all of these things related to consistent scheduling, better practices around supervision, so on and so forth.

And you have plans to launch something, you know, at least we're calling when I read this report, HR for small business. Is that what it's still called for smaller employers who want to pursue high road practices?

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, I can tell you some news on that. I'm not sure but it's still going to be called that, you're right. We (we start and we write) to report and then, you know, people really get started. So – but I'll describe two things. One is an (award) facing idea that are small business services is pushing which is this HR for small business.

This is under development. They're speaking with businesses to figure out how to support and complement what businesses are requesting, so they can do better and show them how. There's – they are, you know, they're willing and how do they create smart and effective labor practices. The idea to bring them a package of technical assistance.

And we see a lot of opportunity for small businesses in retail and good service especially. And so, we're speaking with them right now to hear from them about what they would be looking for. But I also want to say that, you know, that's the (award) strategy in word. The city as an employer has also try to do some outreach to our own employees and try to help support our own employees with...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Awesome.

GAUL-STIGGE: ... with...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Sorry.

GAUL-STIGGE: Yes, you know, great. To offer some free checking accounts and direct deposit. Our department of consumer's affairs (inaudible), their office of financial empowerment has been doing this for our own employees because we think this is the kind of stabilization and financial supports that we were talking about that help support businesses in the long run.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. I want to remind the audience to send in your questions to [audioconference@clasp](mailto:audioconference@clasp.org), that's C-L-A-S-P, .org. Katy another job quality recommendation focuses on improving income through such things as you were discussing right now, financial empowerment and you mentioned this in the context of city employees.

And also, the report suggest and recommends that your office support legislative including an increase to minimum wage. Any more broad developments in that area outside of city employees?

GAUL-STIGGE: Yes. I mean, the policy arm is an important piece. The things that I have been talking about before our, you know, what can we do to help, you know, create a race to the top and celebrate good businesses but the policy arm obviously can be incredibly powerful. Our Mayor de Blasio has made a commitment to pursue local control and minimum wage here in the city, advocating for \$13 an hour next year and then \$15 an hour by 2019.

And additionally, he has made direct appeals to employers when he meets with them and our association for better New York made a direct call to employers to start paying \$13 an hour right now. So, you know, he is extremely committed to increasing the minimum wage, you know, by the policy arms and just through direct asking.

We want to make sure that the, I mean the other thing that I would say is we want to support the financial empowerment campaign which we really see some great examples. There's ways to combine a financial empowerment campaign with support to businesses.

And we have a local CBO here that's done a great job in actually working with businesses called employer solutions to provide the businesses the stability that comes when their employees have good financial supports and good financial resources, whether it'd be work supports, whether it'd be knowing more about their direct deposit, knowing more about the debt that they have. And that can create stability within their workforces.

So, we've got some great examples that we're working with on both sides of those coin.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Great. And another observation in the report is about churn in the workforce development system, churn is costly for the low wage worker but it's also costly for the workforce system itself. And while you all are clearly prioritizing this as a problem in New York City, I have a two questions.

Do you have a sense or maybe a particular study that calculates or estimates the cost to New York of this churn?

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, actually I think the first question that David got was around also around this which is around an ROI study, you are...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Right.

GAUL-STIGGE: ... trying to talk about what the impacts of training or working with high road employers would be versus not training or, you know, not working with high road employers from a workforce system. We would be very interest with anyone on the call who would want to partner on a study like that with us.

We have started talking with, you know, thinking in design around and steady like that but we don't have one of those yet. However, clear pathways is an approach that moved away from rapid attachment and helps build the system. And so, when you move away from a system of just rapid attachment and you have this more – this focus on job quality, the idea is – and the studies do show that when you have either higher wages or you have more work supports that people do not return either to the (10) of system or return to the workforce development system in the same or at the same rate.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We have a question here for you Katy and I'm going to rephrase it, it comes from Pooja Gupta at Rutgers University, and essence Pooja is asking whether or not a job of a better quality is one which recognizes that low wage workers particularly might need access to post-secondary education.

So, the question for you is, “Whether or not your system in assessing whether or not an employer is a higher road employer, whether or not they have – there will be a consideration for whether or not that employer enables their employees in some way to pursue post-secondary education?”

GAUL-STIGGE: It's a – that's a great - and I think it builds off of the “earn as you learn” that we were just talking about. So, WIOA really encourages and we, in our report, are really encouraging these pathways which means that, you know, honoring the dignity of work, any kind – the kind of work, and then obviously moving up the – by taking on more post-secondary is a important part of the pathways.

So, both working with employers and working with schools to figure out ways that we can make that easier on New Yorkers as a key part of I'm sort of picturing in my head are graphic that shows the pathway which definitely illustrates that, you know, you want to move along a continuum.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Katy I'm going to turn to John right now, but before I do I suspect you're going to get a lot of follow-up with respect to you suggestion that you're interested in partnering on these research questions. A large of our audience, folks do come from research institutions that are looking into these topics, so be prepared.

GAUL-STIGGE: I will (inaudible), thank you.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: All right. John at the Aspen Institute you manage Skills for Americas Future, give us a quick commercial about the mission of that project?

COLBORN: Sure. I'm happy to be here and sign me up Katy as one of those people interested in (inaudible) ROI, so I'll just put that in right now. So, I manage a small program at the Aspen Institute called Skills for Americas Future and we really operate at the intersection of looking to advance economic opportunity, meet the skill needs of employers and leverage our community college and other workforce development actors to do all of that.

We work to celebrate, to study, and to capitalize partnerships between community colleges, educators and trainers, and employers, and support policies that advance these partnerships.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, let's turn to upscale America specifically.

COLBORN: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Which is an employer driven initiative focused on what employers can do to increase the scalable level of working Americans specifically and this is what you all speak to frontline workers. How did upscale America gets started John and what's are its goals?

COLBORN: Sure. Upscale America is a coalition of business led and business serving organizations. It includes organizations like the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Business Leaders United, the Committee for Economic Development, the Small Business Majority, the Human Resources Policy Association and others. And what we seek to do is to really respond to President Obama's call in the State of the Union Address for a renaissance of middle class opportunity in America.

We work to spotlight and support the work of companies that are committed to supporting their frontline workers in advancing their access to education, training, and opportunity so that they can have a pathway into the middle class. We broadly call this up scaling.

And we also work to support and identify companies who are thinking about doing this or at the very beginning stages of doing this, this sort of work and look to enable them to expand their work in this area and support their work in adopting various up scaling practices. And I should know, we really have a sort of catalogue of six actions that we ask employers to consider as part of their up scaling agenda.

This includes things that we've all talked about in this web – in this seminar, on the – investing in on the job training for frontline workers, investing in education and education benefits programs for workers, supporting career pathways efforts in companies and across companies, supporting credentialing of employees, supporting apprenticeship work, and then of course supporting flexible scheduling for employees so that they are able to pursue all these different kinds of education and economic advancement endeavors.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. So, let's jump on that last one. One about scheduling flexibility or stability. What are some action steps under that headline?

COLBORN: So, and you know, it's an interesting, and first off I'd like to just say, for the advocates who are on the call, who have been working on this issue for years and years, I know there are many, I just want to acknowledge the work that you all have done to get this on the national agenda.

And I can tell you, not that many years ago we've been talking about up scaling Americas workforce, probably scheduling wouldn't have ended up on that agenda but it is and it's really a tribute to a lot of the good work of many of the people on the call and you, Jodie and others, so congratulations on that.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Oh, thank you, John.

COLBORN: So, let me just say that I think when we go to employers and ask them to consider scheduling flexibility and supports for workers we're really asking for three different things. One is to provide schedules in advance so that folks have a sense of stable, predictable, and consistent hours that they can then plan around.

And then, on the complete opposite ends, to have a certain amount of flexibility so that they can respond to needs of workers who can – who may need particular time off to be able to pursue education and training and the economic opportunity – economic opportunities.

And the third thing that we also ask employers to consider as part of this work is also making sure that their employees have access to advising or mentoring that enables them to make the smart decisions around pursuing education, pursuing training, getting credentialed and advancing their careers and their opportunities.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, John, you're coming at this from the perspective of what employers can voluntarily step up and do, and these are clear, concrete suggestions for how businesses can do more around scheduling. Do you think employers are actually going to bite and change these practices?

COLBORN: So, as a part of our initial work on the up scaling America effort we've actually gone out to employers and ask them to detail their practices in their area, and make commitments to either maintaining or sustaining their work or doing new work in this area. And I must say, we are seeing quite a bit of activity around the scheduling and job quality aspects of the up scaling agenda.

And I'm happy to chat a little bit, so I chat about what some of those commitments are?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Yes, (geez), absolutely.



COLBORN: So, I think we are seeing really three or four, sort of a grouping of three or four different aspects of this work. The first is, for companies that have multiple shifts we have seen a number of companies say that they will allow those employees that are pursuing education and training to have a priority call on a particular because that enables them to access education training – education and training. So, that's certainly one approach that we're seeing employers take.

Another approach is that another – a number of our employers and their commitments are planning to make sure that education and training is available, sort of is an activity that can be pursued on the clock or at least partially on the clock which helps employers – employees to be able to take advantage of the education and training during the work day.

We're also seeing employers working with, you know, training providers and community colleges to ask them to be more flexible in the way that they deliver instruction, and including doing – providing for onsite instruction during shift changes, so that people who are there coming on can get access to classes before they start or people who are coming off shift can get classes after their finishing their work day.

And then finally, we're seeing some employers making or providing access to online and other kinds of, what they call, a synchronize education and training opportunities so that folks are able to take advantage of that on their own schedule.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, when you're describing these different ways that employers are practicing more sensitivity to these kinds of concerns about schedule, are you describing what you're learning, employers are already doing or what employers are saying to you that they hope to do in the future?

COLBORN: So, this is actually a mix of different (inaudible), so this should be – that would – all the things I mentioned were both reflective of work that employers are doing and also reflective of new commitment that employers are making in this space. You know, one thing about the scheduling aspect of the up scaling agenda is that its amazingly just common sensical.

I mean it really is looking at what do employer – what do employees need in order to be able to engage in education and training activities that makes them more productive at work and that can make the employer a – an employer of choice and enable it to attract a higher quality workforce. And then, not incidentally advances economic opportunity for the worker.

So, I think employers when they sit down with employees who are interested in doing this work very quickly find the kinds of things that help advance that agenda. And as I say it's quite common sensical.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: So, John, this is great that in some employers are responding to your conversations and outreach and revealing different ways that they're improving their own practices or plan to in order to assist frontline workers. And that's one thing an employer

– a high road employer but there’s also a bunch of evidence that some employers won’t voluntarily improve practices and some we know don’t even know (bay) laws, like look at wage (fast), right, there’s just a little bit too much of that.

And then just some employers but it’s a lot of employees. So, voluntary practices can make a vital and important contribution. I mean, they create a body of evidence about how it can be done, they suggest innovations in this area and more. What are some of the outcomes you’re looking for with your initiative in this arena in terms of how far of a reach you think you can make and so on and so forth?

COLBORN: Yes. So, and let me say, you know, I think we would be the first to say that the up scaling effort is only one of a series of strategies that helps get at the job quality issue. And my own sense is that to the extent you can get to positive outcomes to voluntary change who actually end up with better outcomes all around.

But I’d be the first to say that there are many needs for regulatory roles and simple enforcement of existing laws to be sure that the low road is cut off for employers who are doing the wrong thing. That being said, I think we do see opportunities to grow the practice of what we call up scaling more broadly to be able to get more employers to adopt these kinds of practices.

When we talk with a human resources leaders in – among employers, they say over and over again that they know anecdotally that these kinds of practices pay for their company. That these are smart practices. They enhance the competitiveness of the firm, the productivity of workers that enables them to attract workers who themselves are more competitive.

But I think there remains the need for an articulated pathway for how employers can adopt these practices, as well as a research based that shows beyond the anecdote that, in fact, there are – there is a good business case to be made here for these practices.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, I thank you very much John. And I’m going to ask you each this – to answer this question we’ve just received from (Veronica Avia). But before I do that, I want to repeat for everybody in the audience to write down on a little piece of paper star-zero, so if you have any technical difficulty you can connect with the conference call company and they will take care of your difficulties, so again, star-zero for anybody who has any challenges.

(Veronica) asked the question that I’d like each of you to take in turn, if you will, starting with David. “How would you move employers in the precious work/gray market? And that she defines as house cleaning et cetera sector to enact this high road practices. How would your work encourage work with employers in these sectors to upscale?”

Clearly, this is riffing off of your comments John, but I want to give everybody a chance.

COLBORN: Yes.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Because this is a – this really a challenging question. So, David any insights?

SOCLOW: Yes. That's – that is tough and in part because those are employers that have done less in the way of looking to train their work forces. But you know, it is possible that, you know, training resources for – to help those employees can be available and could possibly be an incentive but I won't sugar coat it, that's a difficult group to have come forward and seek to do a partnership with government to upscale their workforce.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And Katy have you been grappling with this at all, so far in New York?

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, yes. You know, obviously we have a lot of groups that want us to address this issue and it's an important one. But I think one of the solutions that has come to light sometimes is the idea of worker Co-ops. We have women's entrepreneurship initiative that just been launched by our small business services.

And this is trying to address, you know, incubation and women entrepreneurship and some women in supporting some workers Co-ops which can sometimes spin off of out of the sectors and support workers, and provide them with improved scheduling and improved resources. So, that would be an area that we are going to continue to explore and support.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: OK. And John back at you.

COLBORN: Katy, I'm so glad you mentioned that Co-ops, I think that's – not only does it provide an immediate way for workers to be able to access better higher quality jobs but it really demonstrates the capability of having those jobs in these kinds of sectors. And the only thing I would add to the excellent comments that Dave and Katy have already put out there is that, I think there is certainly a role for advocacy groups to work on the consumer education side of this equation.

That if consumers understand the value of working with providers how are paying better wages, who are providing better conditions for their employees, then you can help to drive firm change in that respect as well.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: We are going to need to wrap, we have only about five minutes left. And I believe I could give each of you a chance to ask a question or make an observation about another speaker's statement. So, David you can either ask Katy a question or make an observation about what she's been saying about New York, Katy, you about John, and then John, you about David.

So, David to Katy.

SOCOLOW: Well, Katy I first want to echo Jodie's congratulations, I think, that the career pathways report is just so exciting and just wondered a little bit more about how you are targeting the job quality in the lowest wage sectors with where sometimes the greatest job growth is...

GAUL-STIGGE: Yes.

SOCOLOW: ... but have you decided on which industries to focus on?

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, we have a – thanks for your question, David. So, we actually have called for looking at retail and food service as two of our industry partnerships. And as CLASP, in your research have said there really is not career pathways without industry partnerships. You can't simply build a pathway without direct involvement from understanding the industry having sector based connections, otherwise we go back to the train and pray model which is not where we want to go.

So, I think we are hoping in the next or we will in the next year launch a retail and food service industry partnership which is in another word sometimes intermediary or a group that will come together. And we're designing what that would look like. We think that, that one is going to be – those two will be really are keys to understanding how we can work with these sectors that are growing and that are so vital, and so important to our – the economy of New York City and to New Yorkers themselves but that's – that's really our main strategy but we really see that just like you do at class the real interconnection between clear pathways and industry partnerships.

SOCOLOW: Yes, absolutely.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Terrific. And Katy you get to observe or ask of John.

GAUL-STIGGE: Well, I, you know, John I think that, you know, figuring out the tools for the employers is something that we're extremely interested and how we, you know, we also want to recognize them. I guess, my question would be, how do we, you know, as you're starting upscale America, you know, how do we prove, I guess, you know, that ROI question or how do we, you know, build this momentum around showing the difference between a company that has these kinds of practices and one that does not?

COLBORN: So, excellent question and that I have three different sort of quick answers on that. One is that in the upscale – among the upscale partners, the organizations that have joined this coalition, many have express a strong interest in working together on starting to do these proof cases around the return on investment.

And in fact, one project that will shortly be underway that'll be looking at the education benefits component of the upscale agenda and developing a return on investment analysis for companies that are providing those kinds of benefits. But if I – if we had the opportunity, we would certainly want to spark that conversation and think about a way

forward for doing these kind of return on investment analysis for each of the kinds of upscale efforts that are underway.

The second thing I just say is that we have been – one of our first projects out of the gates here is working with the consulting firm, Deloitte to develop a playbook source...

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: John, John...

COLBORN: Yes?

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... I need to tell you that someone with Deloitte is on your audience...

COLBORN: Oh, excellent.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: ... in your audience today.

COLBORN: Oh, great. Well, thank you to Deloitte who has been providing amazing pro bono support for this effort. So, they are furiously working to catalog examples of employer actions in this area and to create a guide book or a guidance resource for employers that are looking to do more of this work, and thinking about how to either start or advance their work in the up scaling area.

And the third thing I'll just say is that there has been quite a bit of conversation around it – could we think about creating a sort of designation for those firms that seem to be doing more of the right thing, call it sort of a lead standard, you know, how buildings have lead environmental standards. Could we have a set of practice standards for employers? A sort of gold, silver, platinum ranking for employers that would both give them an opportunity to benchmark their practices against peers and also a way to let consumers and other stakeholders know the kinds of good work that they're doing.

And so, there is actually on the drawing boards thinking about creating that designation and I imagine there will be more news to come on that in the coming weeks and months.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: And John, a quick question for David.

COLBORN: David, thanks so much for tying this conversation back to our public workforce development system in your opening remarks. And I wonder if you could just give any guidance or suggestion to providers, advocates, folks who are working with the workforce development system on how to use this WIOA rule writing and implementation period to get workforce investment board and state workforce investment policy more align to the job quality agenda.

SOCOLOW: Thank you, John, that's a – that is the crucial time right now, I would say. The state workforce agencies and the local workforce boards are just now really beginning the thinking about planning. There's going to be four year plans that are going to be written really in a different way and getting this onto to the radar screen by talking

to chief elected officials and those policy makers in that area about the fact that job quality can be built it.

It can be built in specifically to the earn and learn training grants that I mentioned but it can also just be built in as an overall objective of we're not just trying to place people in any job but in family sustaining jobs. I think that's a policy shift that many people can support and that workforce agencies need to build in to what they're doing and with this new law that is going to start being implemented this July.

LEVIN-EPSTEIN: Well, that's a great note to close on. And I want to thank each of you, David Socolow at CLASP, Katy Gaul-Stigge with the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development in New York City, and John Colborn at the Aspen Institute, thank you, each of you. And I want to thank the audience, you guys are awesome.

Thanks for throwing out lots of good questions and they're still coming. So, we'll try and get some of those answered as well. And I want to make sure that everybody on the call knows that all registrants will be sent as soon as we get it which we hope is shortly. And a tape of this audio conference, as well as a transcript of it, and continuing to send you links so that you can learn more from the resources that were sent earlier and the additional ones we promised.

Also, you'll get a survey monkey from us and we'll hope you'll take just a few seconds to answer the questions there, so that we can keep offering you in our series on job scheduling throughout this year, schedules and topics, and issues, and a session that meets your needs. So, again, thank you everybody, and then particularly, David, Katy, and John, thank you very, very much.

Have a great day.

GAUL-STIGGE: Thank you.

SOCOLOW: A pleasure.

COLBORN: Thanks.

**END**