

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Workforce Investment Council**



**Fiscal Year 2020
Budget Oversight Hearing**

**Testimony of
Ahna Smith
Executive Director**

**Before the
Committee on Labor and Workforce Development
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Elissa Silverman, Chairperson**

April 24, 2019
10:00 AM
Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Silverman, members, and staff of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. I am Ahnna Smith, Executive Director of the Workforce Investment Council (WIC). I am pleased to testify before you today on the Mayor's FY2020 Budget.

Last month, Mayor Bowser presented her Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020) Budget and Financial Plan entitled "A Fair Shot." The Mayor's budget reflects our commitment to providing all Washingtonians with a pathway to prosperity, and to making Washington, DC a place where people of all backgrounds are able to live and thrive. This budget includes important investments in infrastructure, education, affordable housing, health and human services, economic opportunity, seniors, and public safety. These investments reflect the key priorities identified by District residents at Budget Engagement Forums and telephone town halls held during the budget formulation process. Mayor Bower's budget will ensure that our agency and the entire government have the necessary staff and resources to help meet our ambitious goals.

The investments we make in achieving our ambitious goals are more important now than ever. In FY2020 and beyond, we are working to convene partners and reinforce the infrastructure necessary to support and deliver a world-class workforce system in an ever-changing landscape. By expanding opportunities for residents and connecting them to the training and development necessary for them to excel in the workforce of today and tomorrow, we will achieve Mayor Bowser's vision of creating pathway to the middle class for all District residents. We know that Washingtonians are eager to take advantage of the opportunities they see all around them, and it is our responsibility and commitment to ensure that the workforce system - our business community, providers, educational institutions, and agency partners - is aligned, coherent, and working for our residents and businesses.

The FY2020 budget includes numerous investments that will help more individuals and families thrive in the District, including those we know are most critical to residents' ability to connect to and sustain family-supporting careers. Housing, childcare, and transportation are among the factors I hear most from job-seekers as they consider their ability to pursue workforce training programs or potential job opportunities. Mayor Bowser has made significant investments in the FY2020 budget in all these areas, including a \$130 million investment in the Housing Production Trust Fund and a new \$20 million investment toward workforce housing. This budget also continues support for the District's child care subsidy and makes permanent the child care tax credit for families with children in licensed child care centers and homes in the District. And finally, this budget invests in helping residents get to and from their places of work by extending free rides on the DC Circulator indefinitely.

This year, Mayor Bowser's budget includes \$1,500,000 in local funds to support the WIC's staff, operations, and core work. The funding allocated in the budget, in addition to the federal funding we receive under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), will allow the agency to better achieve its vision for delivering and implementing the critical components of a world-class workforce system.

In recent years, the WIC has implemented the Workforce Intermediary Pilot Program to support sector-based industry training partnerships. In FY2019, we awarded four grants to providers that train and support residents with securing employment in the areas of culinary arts and hospitality, information technology, security, and building management. We have learned much about best practices from the pilot programs and look forward to leveraging our local funding in FY2020 to develop implement a permanent workforce intermediary and sector strategy program. The WIC in recent years has also implemented the Career Pathways Task Force, which brings together agency and provider partners focused on expanding on-ramps to careers for residents who need both education and workforce training opportunities. The Task Force will deliver its next strategic plan later this year. We look forward to identifying recommendations for integrating lessons learned through the Task Force into longer-term and sustainable programming for residents. We plan to leverage our local and federal funding in FY2020 to continue to support direct services to residents, while also identifying how and where integrated education and training programs, including technical assistance for providers, should exist more permanently in the workforce system.

Finally, the FY2020 budget will allow us to continue to build upon the work we have been doing this year to increase our coordination, alignment, and convening efforts with partners. Specifically, we want to ensure that the workforce training and career and support services provided to job-seekers at the American Job Centers (AJCs) work together to get more DC residents connected to sustained employment and meaningful careers. In FY2020, we plan to leverage our federal funding to once again contract the services of a One Stop Operator that will be tasked with serving as a connector and resource to help front line AJC staff and provider partners give the highest levels of customer service to our residents, ultimately leading to improved employment outcomes.

Conclusion

In closing, the resources allocated to the Workforce Investment Council will ensure we are positioned to play a key role in bringing together stakeholders and ensuring that the workforce development system in the District is aligned to deliver on Mayor Bowser's vision of providing pathways to the middle class for all DC residents. I am proud to support her vision and work in collaboration with the Council, this Committee, and the many government, business,

and community leaders committed to providing a fair shot at opportunity to the residents of the District of Columbia. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.