Maryland Career Pathways Summit
The Hotel at Arundel Preserve | Hanover, MD
Sept. 23, 2011 | 9:15 – 9:45 AM
Assistant Secretary, Brenda Dann-Messier's Remarks
(Remarks 20 - 25 minutes)

Intro:
Good morning, I appreciate the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning's invitation to participate in this summit. I am pleased to be here at the culmination event of your Planning Grant from the Department of Labor. Congratulations on being one of the nine states and two tribal areas to participate in a career Pathways Local Implementation Planning Grant. In my preparation to speak to you all this morning, I ran across a quote from Abraham Lincoln that I felt was particularly relevant. He said, **"If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax."** As I read this quote, it struck me as a fitting framing for my remarks here today. It captures the spirit of the challenge we face in this 21st century global economy. Our adult learners need educators, government, industry, and the community to come together to help them sharpen their skills. In order to remove the obstacles in their way – they will need to have the right tools for the job. We must provide pathways for not only this generation of workers but the next.

Background (DPAFLC):
I am proud to be the first Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education who is also an adult educator. In addition to adult education and career and technical education, I oversee our community college agenda and correctional education program. In this job I bring all the hopes and aspirations of the thousands of students that we served at DP each year, and the thousands more that I have met all across the country.

I am also proud to work for a President and Secretary of Education who know that education is an investment in our people and in our future, and that our work in Adult education is central to the goals and objectives of the Administration.

I bring you all greetings this morning on behalf of the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and Undersecretary Martha Kanter. Secretary Duncan and Under Secretary Kanter have made it clear that the work of OVAE is a priority of the Department. Their support for our work is unprecedented, and I am grateful to both of them for recognizing the vital role we play in advancing the education, employability, and success of millions of Americans.

Prior to coming to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) I had the privilege of serving as the President of Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center (DP) for over a decade. When I arrived at DP in 1999, I found that students and staff were only working toward getting their GED and not considering higher education. I immediately set out to change the culture within the agency and to motivate our students toward college.

- **Dorcas Place (1-5)**

Your work is also critical to the success of the Administration and our ability to reach our goals. As I have stated many times, this our time to strengthen our work – to be an active participant in the Administration's reform agenda. We must seize this moment and capitalize on the unprecedented support from the federal government and from all the state, local, business, and philanthropic partners assembled here today – and work together to provide multiple pathways for:

- The more than 90 million adults with basic and below basic literacy skills
- Adults and out-of-school youth with a GED looking to transition into postsecondary education
- As well as those with some postsecondary exposure and experience who require additional support services to transition into and COMPLETE a career pathways that leads to family sustaining wages and affords them full participation in our global economy and in society.

And, given the current economic and budgetary realities in which we are operating, it has never been more imperative that we clearly align our work with the goals of economic recovery and workforce development.

Local "Thank You" & Acknowledgements:
Let me take a step back and tell you how honored I am to be here with you at this summit. This is an incredibly impressive list of partners who are giving graciously of their time to be here today. I commend all the stakeholders from government, business, education, and philanthropic organizations – for coming together to get something important done for your state.

I would like to thank **Secretary, Alex Sanchez** and **Assistant Secretary, Paulette Francois**, and their staffs from MD Dept of Labor, Licensing and Regulation for including me in this summit.
I'd also like to specifically recognize –

- **Mary Alice McCarthy**, from the U.S. Department of Labor
- **Judy Mortrude**, from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- **Trudy Chara**, from the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
- **Irene Lee**, from the Annie E. Casey Foundation
- **Patricia Tyler**, State Director
- And, **Katharine Oliver**, State Director CTE Maryland.

I'd also like to acknowledge and thank the Community College leaders from around the state of Maryland including Presidents, Vice Presidents, Con Ed Deans and Directors, Program Directors, instructional dean, student support services for being here to support this summits efforts.

I could go on and on, but time prevents me from acknowledging the numerous individuals who serve recognition one by one. However, I do want to thank each and every one of you for your individual efforts to assist low-skilled adults get on a career pathway.

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President's 2020 Goal & ED support:

At the U.S. Department of Education, all of our efforts are focused on creating and supporting opportunities for every American to achieve the President's 2020 goal which is – within a decade, America will once again have the "best educated, most competitive workforce in the world." Achieving this shift will require courageous work, great commitment, and unprecedented capacity from stakeholders all across the country. To support you, Secretary Duncan has challenged us to help transform the Department from a compliance-driven bureaucracy to an engine of innovation. We know that the best ideas will always come from the field. Our role is to help generate common definitions of success, build momentum and progress, provide resources for reform, and help scale up what's working.

To realize our cradle-to-career vision and achieve President Obama's goal, it is clear that we need to raise the bar, close the achievement gap, and reduce the drop-out rate for all our youth. Seamless, continuous education and training opportunities are vital to America's economic and social prosperity. Since January 2009, the U.S. Department of Education has been implementing a comprehensive, "cradle to career" agenda – the Administration's strategic plan for education reform.

Adult basic and secondary education, including English language and civics training and correctional education, career and technical education (CTE), and community colleges are all vital to our efforts. In order to reach the President's 2020 goal, many of those new students attaining degrees will need to be workers, non-traditional students and adult learners - or, *21st Century Learners*, as Secretary Duncan likes to call them.

Our success is dependent upon our ability to dismantle silos and foster innovative collaboration within and between secondary and postsecondary education, workforce development and training, business and industry, and community-based and philanthropic communities. We must continue to work to leverage our resources and relationships to support State and local efforts.

In order to remain competitive for the high-wage, high-skill, high-demand careers of today and tomorrow, we must ensure that every American has access to the highest quality of education and training. Ensuring quality will require our collaborative efforts: businesses must partner with community colleges and other postsecondary educational institutions; industry must partner with workforce development and training programs; States must partner with local and Federal agencies and programs.

Adult Education Must Support Economic Recovery and Workforce Demands:

In recent years, many States have been struggling with budget deficits of historic proportions. As States and the federal government make hard decisions about funding for domestic programs, programs that can demonstrate economic benefits stand a better chance of survival.

In a climate of such high stakes fiscal decision-making, adult education cannot afford to have its economic contributions ignored or misunderstood. Particularly since the ***Bureau of Labor Statistics***—as well as numerous other data sources—clearly document the connection between American workers' skills levels with both employment status and earnings.

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Building the critical links between adult education, workforce development, and economic recovery and development is not only vital to our success in preparing our students for 21st Century global realities, but is crucial to America's economic future. And there are additional economic considerations as well.

First, closing the skills gaps in the American workforce can increase the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In fact, a ***2009 McKinsey & Company report*** calculated the economic impact of America's skills deficit and found that if we had closed the international achievement gap U.S. GDP in 2008 would have been $1- $2 trillion higher. That's between 9% and 16% of GDP!

The report termed our failure to close the gap "the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession," and called for a "game-changing national strategy." A coordinated education reform and workforce development strategy can be that change agent – but it has to focus on dramatically increasing the skills and credentials of adult learners, and on an unprecedented scale. Data from multiple sources tells us that an educated workforce has a more significant impact on regional and metropolitan growth in per capita income and worker productivity than any other factor.

Second, I think we are all aware that the days of well-paying jobs requiring low levels of education are gone. In fact, both government and independent research has found that the fastest-growing market sector is what is now called "middle skills" jobs. And, these middle skills require at least some level of postsecondary education or training. By 2018, the greatest number of new jobs is expected to be in this middle skills job sector, particularly those that require an Associate's degree or some form of postsecondary CTE certification/credential.

At the local level, regardless of whether an adult education program resides in a school district, a community college, or other organizational structure, organizations are making decisions about how to focus resources on what are considered mission critical programs and services. For example, community colleges that understand the value of basic skills and ESL programs are more likely to support those programs at a time when they must cut other critical programs and services.

There are at least two areas in which we must focus resources—not just time and money, but talent and innovative thinking as well—in order to ensure that the nation's workforce has the skills needed to compete in the 21st century global economy:

- **First**, to strengthen the adult pipeline into postsecondary education and training, we must integrate career pathways programming more seamlessly into adult education programs;
- And, **second**, this integration must occur in ways that afford us the opportunity to ensure that all adult learners have access to effective teachers.

❖ ***I will discuss the need for adult education pipelines through career pathways first.***

Strengthen the Adult Education Pipeline through Career Pathways:

I don't think there is anyone is this room today that is not aware of efforts to get more adult learners out of basic education and into postsecondary education or training. Many adult learners in the community are actively seeking workforce development services through the One Stop Career Centers. And the results are pretty clear: a coordinated education reform and workforce development strategy can be a change agent. But it has to focus on dramatically increasing the skills and credentials of adult learners - on an unprecedented scale. At the highest policy levels, there is recognition that a priority must be placed on getting more people degrees and credentials in the areas of highest projected job growth.

The **National Governors Association** launched its signature **Compete to Complete** Initiative last year, recognizing the importance of postsecondary education to the future labor market. This high profile policy initiative cited research from the Georgetown report that projects the US must increase the number of individuals pursuing a postsecondary degree or credential above the current level by three million.

The Compete to Complete report further states that to successfully increase the proportion of degree and certificate holders, the focus must be on adult learners. Listen to what the report states:

"Demographic shifts, including the aging of baby boomers and a smaller, less-educated younger generation, dictate that the only way to meet the future workforce demands is to increase the education level of today's adults. The number of younger individuals continuing their education past high school is insufficient to fill the impending skills gap, potentially leading to a decline in economic competiveness for States and the nation."

The recognition of the power of educating adults and moving them beyond the GED or high school diploma to postsecondary education is an opportunity for adult education to demonstrate its value to America's economic well being and workforce development – and in the fiscal environment we continue to face, decisions about the life or death of various domestic programs is weighed against their ability to add value to the economic and workforce challenges we face as a nation.

So how do we move adults faster and more efficiently into occupational skills training that leads to industry recognized credentials? And how to we engage adults entering our One Stops seeking education and training, and link them to career pathways in critical and emerging sectors? One program model that is of primary focus in our quest to dramatically improve the number of skilled adults with credentials in the fastest growing occupations is the career pathways model.

The development of career pathway approaches has been a focus of the technical education field, community and technical colleges, and our workforce partners. The US Department of Labor has invested in the community college development of career pathways. The Department of Health and Human Services has invested a 7-10 year evaluation identifying emerging directions for increasing self sufficiency (ISIS). The ISIS evaluation is focusing on the career pathways framework as one of its two intervention strategies in the evaluation design.

Additionally, numerous foundations have focused on career pathway strategies, including the Joyce Foundation's investment in mid western states and recent investments by the Gates Foundation, the Open Society Fund, the Kresge Foundation, and the Kellogg Foundation.

OVAE's Work:
Through the progressive investments made by these organizations, including investments made by OVAE, it appears that one primary way in which career pathways are implemented into adult education programs involves the use of bridge programs or bridging models that help transition adults into specific occupational areas. These models are experimenting with ways to get adults through coursework leading to credentials in more efficient and faster ways than the traditional sequential model of completing basic skills and then entering occupational courses.

Models, such as the one developed in Washington State (I-Best), uses co-enrollment and co-teaching and are being replicated in other States as there is increasing data supporting their efficacy with certain subpopulations of adult learners. Additionally, adult education programs across the country are identifying the need to incorporate career counseling, career exploration, job shadowing and other career development strategies into adult education programs for learners at all levels.

OVAE has intently engaged with state and local leadership to push forward with the needed reforms – and promotes findings and programs from organizations that should be scaled. OVAE has worked hard to align our programs with the best practices from the states – as well as leveraging our existing programs with private and non-profit initiatives.

We are investing in a number of national leadership activities to support State leaders in these very important efforts. We have our $2 million **Policy to Performance** project, which is helping interagency State teams in eight States establish relationships and forge State policies that support adult students' transition to postsecondary education or training. The project is also developing tools and resources that, upon its conclusion, can assist all States.

We have **partnered with the Open Society Foundation's Special Fund for Poverty Alleviation**, to coordinate our initial Policy to Performance investment with their $3 million, allowing us to expand our efforts related to the lowest skilled adults and those reentering society from incarceration. This investment signals a shared interest in some of our neediest populations and an interest in innovative solutions to improve outcomes for these learners. We are thrilled to be part of such an unprecedented partnership and look forward to learning more about the kinds of services, programs, and policies that best support our students in entering and succeeding in postsecondary education.

We also have our $3.5 million **Designing Instruction for Career Pathways** project which is in the process of providing assistance to state and local adult educators on how to create and implement high quality bridge courses and programs. The current $3.1 million **LINCS project** contains both a workforce development and a transitions collection of materials and resources—including discussion lists. These materials will be updated and repackaged in a re-competed LINCS that will launch by October 1st of this year.

W-I-A Reauthorization:
In OVAE, we believe we are in a unique time of change and reform, and we are hoping Congress will reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. As we are now doing with CTE, we conducted a nationwide Community Conversations Tour on strengthening our workforce development system. That extensive in-person and electronic input, along with feedback from national, state, and local organizations, yielded six broad areas for reform.

- **I want to briefly share an overview of our areas of reform that illustrate just how closely our work in OVAE is aligned across the federal government, as well as with your work.**

Our **first** priority for W-I-A reauthorization is to provide incentives that will spur innovation in adult education, identify and implement "high impact" practices, and take them to scale nationally – via a **Workforce Innovation Fund**.

Our **second** priority involves strengthening ties between adult and postsecondary education, and between adult education and the public workforce system. This means prioritizing career pathway models for out-of-school youth and adult learners.

Third, we want to make meaningful advances to ensure that our students have highly effective instructors, and professionalize the field of adult education.

Fourth, we recognize that adult education has made incredible progress in the area of accountability. Reauthorization provides an opportunity to build on this work by strengthening State to local accountability provisions by requiring incentives and rewards, and by creating requirement for States to have operational longitudinal data systems (SLDS) connected to employment and postsecondary data. This aligns with your focus on data driven change.

For our **fifth** priority we want to codify the work over the last decade to prepare our non-citizen English learners for citizenship, and all English learners for deeper civic participation. The English literacy/civics program language can make explicit the ability to serve immigrant professionals with targeted workforce services and clarify that English literacy programs may include workforce training.

Our **sixth** and final reauthorization priority allows us to demonstrate our continued commitment to correctional education as an important part of addressing the needs of our learners. There are currently more than 2 million people incarcerated in State and federal prisons, and more than 95% of them will be released back into society. Only 22% of adult prisoners have had any postsecondary experience, meaning that 78% of adult prisoners have *less than or equal to* a high school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) as their highest level of educational attainment.

By removing the current cap on available funding for correctional education and reinstating the 10% set-aside, this increase in available funding will support efforts to ramp up prisoner re-entry programs that are proven to reduce recidivism, including services that begin in institutional settings and continue into community settings.

TAA Grants:
Last March, President Obama signed *The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act*, which included $2 billion over four years to fund the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Initiative. These investments, combined with the President's proposals in the American Jobs Act – provide additional support for hiring and reemployment services and are designed to increase opportunities for the unemployed, including those impacted by trade. The initiative complements President Obama's broader 2020 completion agenda for helping every American have at least one year of post-secondary education. The grant program will expand opportunities for workers by: accelerating progress and reducing time to completion; improving retention and achievement rates; building instructional programs that meet industry needs; and strengthening online and technology-enabled learning. Today, because of this investment made possible by the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, this grant announcement represents funding of $500 million being awarded to institutions representing the 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Every state will receive at least $2.5 million for community college career training programs through this initiative.

Jobs Act:
The economy has been recovering slowly – and state coffers are under considerable pressure. This makes the passage of the President's Jobs Act of paramount importance to all the efforts that we have discussed today. President Obama believes we need to do more than just recover from this economic crisis – we need to rebuild the economy the American way, based on balance, fairness, and the same set of rules for everyone from Wall Street to Main Street. We can work together to create the jobs of the future by helping small business entrepreneurs, by investing in education, and by making things the world buys right here in America. The purpose of the American Jobs Act is simple: put more people back to work and put more money in the pockets of working Americans. The Jobs Act is fully paid for – and will not add a dime to the deficit.

What the Act means for Maryland:
The President is proposing to invest $35 billion to prevent layoffs of up to 280,000 teachers, while supporting the hiring of tens of thousands more and keeping policemen and women and firefighters on the job. These funds would help states and localities avoid and reverse layoffs now, and will provide $541,700,000 in funds to Maryland to support up to 6,000 educator and first responder jobs.

The President is also proposing a $25 billion investment in school infrastructure that will modernize at least 35,000 public schools – investments that will create jobs, while improving classrooms and upgrading our schools to meet 21st century needs. Maryland will receive $315,800,000 in funding to support as many as 4,100 jobs. The President's plan includes $5 billion for investments in facilities modernization needs at community colleges. Investment in modernizing community colleges fills a key resource gap, and ensures these local, bedrock education institutions have the facilities and equipment to address current workforce demands in today's highly technical and growing fields. Maryland could receive $93,900,000 million in funding in the next fiscal year for its community colleges. Federal funds would be targeted to the neediest school districts and those ready to act fast to put people back to work. But the federal government won't fund new construction or get involved in picking which schools to modernize.

The American Jobs Act proposes the most sweeping reforms to the unemployment insurance (UI) system in 40 years help those without jobs transition to the workplace. This could help put the 90,000 long-term unemployed workers in Maryland back to work. Alongside these reforms, the President is reiterating his call to extend unemployment insurance, preventing 17,600 people looking for work in Maryland from losing their benefits in just the first 6 weeks. And, across the country, the number saved from losing benefits would triple by the end of the year. In addition, the President is proposing a new **Pathways Back to Work Fund** to provide hundreds of thousands of low-income youth and adults with opportunities to work and to achieve needed training in growth industries. Pathways Back to Work could place 1,700 adults and 8,300 youths in jobs in Maryland.

The passage of this Act is important to address our countries immediate need for jobs, and to set our economic pathway forward on a solid foundation. The path to prosperity, the way to win the future, is to invest wisely in our infrastructure, schools, and workforce. We ask that everyone visit whitehouse.gov to find out more about the Jobs Act.

In Closing:
In closing I would just challenge you all to remember that the People of Maryland and the nation are counting on government officials, legislators, educators, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations – they are looking to us for leadership. They are running out of time to remove that obstacle from their path, and they need all of us to come together to sharpen their tools. My question to all of you is "Are We Ready?"

Thank you for all of the work you have done, and continue to do.