



2021-22 CSG Healthy States National Task Force

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee

Meeting Summary No. 1 - June 22, 2021

The first meeting of The Council of State Governments (CSG) Healthy States National Task Force – Economic and Workforce Subcommittee took place virtually Tuesday, June 22, 2021. The Subcommittee explored issues related to **COVID-19 Economic Recovery** and **Broadband**.

Economic and Workforce Health – Policy Stage Setting

“Mitigating Hardship, Advancing Equity and Prosperity – Key Economic, Workforce, and Policy Considerations in the Wake of COVID-19”

Wesley Tharpe (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities) provided the subcommittee an overview of what the pandemic has meant in the U.S. for people without a college degree, racial and ethnic minority groups, women and women of color.

- High-wage workers have recovered most lost jobs, but low-wage job losses persist.
- Workers without bachelor’s degrees have experienced the largest job losses.
- The COVID-19 pandemic widened racial and ethnic disparities in share of “prime age” (25-54) population with a job.

Tharpe also discussed the impact of the federal government’s recovery efforts so far and how state funding allocated in the American Rescue Plan can be used to mitigate economic hardship and invest in a more equitable recovery.

[Presentation Recording](#)

COVID-19 Economic Recovery

“America’s Post-COVID Economy”

Rob Atkinson (Information Technology and Innovation Foundation) gave the subcommittee a look ahead at the post-COVID economy by sharing key historical growth indicators:

- Median wages increased around 1% per year from 2005 to 2015.
- Worker dislocation is declining. The first quarter of 2021 marked the lowest number of dislocated workers in a generation.
- The share of contingent or gig economy jobs was lower in 2017 (38%) than in 2005 (4.1%).
- U.S. non-financial institutional profits as a share of GPP are lower today than what they were from 1946-1970.
- Growth in productivity has been historically low, which has negatively affected wage growth.
- Structural shocks to the economy from COVID-19 will take some time to recover.

Atkinson also discussed the taxation and investment strategies that may further encourage economic growth.

Suggestions included supporting business investments through tax incentives, making broadband policies neutral in regard to technology and provider, and providing unemployment insurance programs that encourage workers to get job training, including innovative models like regional skills alliances.

[Presentation Recording](#)

“Job Training & Job Quality: Recent Experience & Implications”

Maureen Conway (The Aspen Institute) shared promising approaches for job training programs, including the efficacy of sector-specific strategies, and connected these advancements to the recovering U.S. labor market. Conway added the caveat that job training programs alone cannot solve the job quality problem. Conway said there are opportunities to improve job quality through job design, business models that support employee ownership, wage increases, and assistance from institutions that support professional development and labor organizing

[Presentation Recording](#)

Broadband and 5G

Anna Read (The Pew Charitable Trusts) and Craig Rice (National Association of Counties) led the subcommittee in an extensive discussion of the future of workforce-enabling technologies such as broadband and 5G. Rice urged the importance of policy that makes high speed internet a necessary utility while Read answered questions about the “adoptability” of these technologies by reminding the subcommittee that sometimes *adoptability* problems are really *poverty* problems that need to be addressed.

Other referenced policy considerations for states included establishing offices on digital inclusion/equity, incorporating digital literacy, minimum broadband speed standards and costs in policy conversations, and using 5G to complement efforts to provide internet service where broadband is not yet available.

[Presentation Recording](#)

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee Focuses

The Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee discussed the ways the Task Force could focus its efforts to highlight policy data and state policy examples, and consider recommendations for COVID-19 economic recovery and broadband along the following focus areas:

- **Redesigning jobs** – The subcommittee is interested in learning more about sectors that may be harder to redesign as they are affected by automation. For example, how are jobs in the ranching industry redesigned? Additionally, the subcommittee is interested in exploring the proper roles of the public and private sectors in efforts to redesign work.
- **English-language learners** – The subcommittee explored the issues of finding workforce training opportunities for English language learners.
- **Student loan debt and college degrees** – The subcommittee took interest in the topic of student loan debt and college degree requirements, suggesting that state workforces could benefit from more emphasis on the community college system and from encouraging employers to hire for skills rather than credentials.

Resources

Speaker Links

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

- [Tracking the COVID-19 Economy's Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships](#) (Report)
- [3 Principles for an Antiracist, Equitable State Response to COVID-19 – and a Stronger Recovery](#) (Report)
- [Priorities for Spending American Rescue Plan's State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds](#) (Report)

Information Technology and Innovation Foundation

- [How to Reform Worker-Training and Adjustment Policies for an Era of Technological Change](#) (Report)
- [Refining the Biden Broadband Proposal](#) (Report)
- [What's the best way to help low-income workers? Automate low-income jobs](#) (Article)

The Pew Charitable Trusts

- [State Broadband Policy Explorer](#) (Database)
- [How States are Expanding Broadband Access](#) (Policy Report)
- [3 Key Components Define Effective State Broadband Programs](#)
- [Broadband Proved a Top Priority for State Policymakers in 2020](#) (Article)
- [Key Lessons for Policy Makers and the Public About Expanding Broadband Access](#) (Resource Webpage)

National Association of Counties Broadband Task Force

- [Task Force Home Page](#)

Policy Examples Highlighted by Task Force Member and Partners

- **Montana** has a [tax credit](#) for employers that incentivizes them to provide apprenticeships for trade industry jobs.
- In 2018, **Vermont** offered up to \$10,000 for people immigrating to rural areas of Vermont for remote work. [A bill introduced in 2021](#) would offer up to \$7,500 to workers willing to move to an area of the state with a below average employment rate.
- **Hawaii's** [House Bill 1278 \(2021\) would assist](#) businesses struggling with the economic impacts of COVID-19 by temporarily rolling back the amount they must pay into the unemployment insurance fund.
- **Massachusetts** worked with Comcast and community leaders to [remove data caps \(internet\) until 2022](#). There also is legislation pending to ban data caps. That bill has bipartisan support.
- [Arkansas' Division of Workforce Services](#) has provided information technology workforce training for those receiving unemployment benefits through approved training providers and is beginning a similar effort in the health care field.
- The **Kauffman Foundation's** [Real World Learning project](#) provides students experiential learning opportunities through partnerships with community employers.

Economic and Workforce Health Subcommittee

- Senator Melissa Hurtado, California (subcommittee co-chair)
- Lieutenant Governor. Kristen Juras, Montana (subcommittee co-chair)
- Representative Kyle Bailey, Maine
- Representative David Bentz, Delaware
- Representative Shawn Bordeaux, South Dakota
- Director Charisse Childers, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas
- Lieutenant Molly Gray, Vermont
- Representative Leon Howard, South Carolina
- Senator Melissa Hurtado, California
- Senator Mary Kunesh, Minnesota
- Senator Fred Martin, Idaho
- Representative Val Okimoto, Hawaii
- Chief Information Officer Shawn Riley, North Dakota
- Representative Andy Vargas, Massachusetts

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