

MONTGOMERY MOVING FORWARD

Mobilizing leaders to work across sectors to solve our biggest problems together

For Immediate Release: October 13, 2014

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‘Montgomery Moving Forward’ Calls for Radical Shift to Single County Authority for Coordination of Workforce Development in Montgomery County

Diverse Coalition of Leaders Calls for Accountability to Ensure Pipeline of Qualified Workers Will Be Available to Fill Region’s Good Jobs of the Future; 80-plus Businesses, Nonprofits, Educators, Government Officials Endorse Plan

ROCKVILLE, MD – In the face of data pointing to an unmistakable shortage of skilled workers over the next 20 years and too many residents that lack the necessary skills to secure and maintain a good job, a leadership group convened by Montgomery Moving Forward today called for a new accountability for a “jobs culture” in Montgomery County, along with the establishment of a single workforce development authority that would be charged with closing the gap between the number of available good jobs and the supply of qualified, skilled workers to fill them.

The coalition of leaders convened by the nonprofit group today issued a “Call to Action: *Fueling our Future with Skilled Workers and Good Jobs*,” which outlines a series of recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of workforce development efforts on a countywide basis. Coalition leaders say they will urge Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett and the County Council to begin work immediately on the creation of a single, consolidated workforce development authority. Currently, a variety of governmental, educational and nonprofit entities across the county are involved in workforce development initiatives.

More than 80 community leaders have endorsed the “Call to Action,” representing the collective voice of businesses, nonprofit groups, professional associations, County government officials, schools and colleges.

As the coalition notes in the report’s opening statement: “Together, we – industry, education, government, nonprofits, philanthropy – need to step up and own our own role in creating a county where every resident looking for a job is employed and on a career path towards self-sufficiency; every employer has a pool of well-trained residents; and new and growing employers choose Montgomery County because of its skilled, ready and willing workforce.”

In its effort to tackle one of the county’s most pressing challenges, Montgomery Moving Forward spent 18 months studying the issue of workforce development and did extensive research to identify successful initiatives that have been employed elsewhere. The group is calling for the creation of a workforce development authority – with strong leadership – that is not only funded and empowered to oversee mutually reinforcing activities across all sectors, but is outcomes-based and held accountable to outcome metrics and aligned with and supported by the County’s Workforce Investment Board.

“Montgomery Moving Forward is about being forward-thinking in the way we work collaboratively, as a community, to address our most critical challenges,” said Shirley Brandman, a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education and one of four co-chairs of the coalition. “Our leadership team began with a focus on workforce development because it is absolutely critical for our future. We must work across sectors to create the right conditions for the economic success of our county and to grow and foster good job opportunities for those who live and work here.”

In unveiling its “Call to Action,” the Montgomery Moving Forward coalition was joined by an array of business leaders, including successful entrepreneur Haroon Mokhtarzada, co-founder and CEO of Webs, which was acquired later by Vistaprint. “It is vividly clear that the economy and the needs of business are changing rapidly,” said Mokhtarzada. “Either we ensure that we are educating and training people to be ready to fill the needs of tomorrow, or we face a continued erosion of the middle class and an ever expanding wealth gap.”

“Montgomery County is not alone on this front – many communities across the country are rethinking their approaches to workforce development and job creation,” said James Lynch, CEO of Social & Scientific Systems, Inc., a rapidly growing Silver Spring, Md.-based firm that hosted an event to unveil the Montgomery Moving Forward report. “We can’t afford *not* to be on the leading edge.”

Among key recommendations in the coalition’s report are calls for the new authority to oversee:

- The design of career and college pathways from middle school to mid-career to provide training and additional support to better equip residents to follow a route to prosperity from education into and through the workforce.
- The development of a continuum of work-based learning opportunities that begins with Montgomery County Public Schools and extends to Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove, for youth and others (i.e. veterans, people with disabilities, foreign born residents, incarcerated residents, and older workers). Its purpose will be to strengthen the connection between education and work and to facilitate the development of personal social networks.
- The adoption of a checklist of principles and measurements to use when evaluating and monitoring current and new workforce development programs.

Montgomery Moving Forward was created in June 2013, following the release of *Beyond Charity: Nonprofit Business in Montgomery County* and simultaneous conversations about the need to approach community problems differently. The 33-member leadership group is co-chaired by Kevin Beverly, executive vice president of Social & Scientific Systems, Inc.; Shirley Brandman, a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education; Mike Knapp, an economic consultant and former County Council member; and Diego Uriburu, executive director of Identity, Inc., a non-profit that serves Latino youth and families in Montgomery County.

Montgomery Moving Forward is practicing a new way of working together to marshal community resources to solve community problems, by bringing together leaders from multiple communities and professions. These areas include leaders from education and academia, business, nonprofits, philanthropy, government, neighborhoods, with the goal of finding common ground and agreeing on a common vision for change. The group works to develop and embrace specific actionable plans and engage in continuous, open communication.

To begin, MMF focused on the issue of good jobs—with opportunities for advancement and with pay and benefits which allow an individual or family to cover basic needs and save without government or private assistance—so that more residents achieve self-sufficiency, more local businesses find qualified

workers, more communities contribute to and share in countywide prosperity and the County can establish lasting pathways to success for its changing community.

Members of the Montgomery Moving Forward Leadership Group:

Uma Ahluwalia

Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Marilyn Balcombe

CEO, Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce

Steve Bauman

Vice President, Global Learning, Marriott International

Kevin Beverly - (Co-Chair)

Executive Vice President, Social & Scientific Systems, Inc.

Shirley Brandman - (Co-Chair)

Member, Montgomery County Board of Education

Bob Buchanan

Partner, Buchanan Partners

Stew Edelstein

President, Universities at Shady Grove

Ronnie Galvin

Executive Director, IMPACT Silver Spring

David Gamse

CEO, Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington

C. Marie Henderson

Executive Director, Community Foundation in Montgomery County

Suzan Jenkins

CEO, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County

Mike Knapp - (Co-Chair)

CEO, SkillSmart

Kelly Leonard

Principal, Taylor-Leonard Corporation

Susan Madden

Chief Government Relations Officer, Montgomery College

Linda McMillan

Legislative Analyst, Montgomery County Council

Luisa Montero

Director, Maryland Multicultural Youth Center/Latin America Youth Center

Manny Ocasio

Chief Human Resources and Integrity Officer, Holy Cross Health

Marta Perez

Senior Vice President and Human Resources Officer, Adventist Healthcare

Arlene Pietranton

Chief Executive Officer, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

DeRionne Pollard

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Director, Montgomery County Department of Economic Development

Karla Silvestre

Director of Community Engagement, Montgomery College

Josh Starr

Superintendent of Schools, Montgomery County Public Schools

Kathy Stevens

Executive Director, Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy

Diego Uriburu - (Co-Chair)

Executive Director, Identity, Inc.

Cliff White

Founding Partner, National Electronics Warranty Corp., and Chair, Neighbors in Need Montgomery