

Testimony from Laurie A. Harvey, Executive Director of CWEE: Center for Work Education and Employment in support of House Bill 1064 on January 27, 2009.

Good Afternoon. My name is Laurie Harvey. I am the Executive Director of CWEE: Center for Work Education and Employment. CWEE is a nonprofit organization with a mission to assist single parents to transition from welfare to work. CWEE has been around for the past 26 years and enjoys funding from private foundations, corporations and we have subcontracts to serve TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) participants in Adams, Denver and Arapahoe counties. We provide job readiness, GED and basic skills, and computer skills training and job placement as well as provide ongoing support through case management.

I am speaking in support of House Bill 1064 because I believe it is a very important time to directly focus on the importance of job creation as well as education and training for those who are especially vulnerable to the challenges of a weak economy. I have been the director of CWEE for the past 20 years and have experienced the ups and downs of the job market in Colorado. But you just need to look at the today's headlines announcing 74,000 new jobs slashed from well know big companies and a local job fair inundated with laid off workers in Denver to know that these are different times.

I believe that the task force created by House Bill 1064 will be the appropriate place to stay focused. I have a concern that proposed job creation initiatives such as those in the economic stimulus package are either not including training to ensure low income populations receive some of the resources or that any proposed training initiatives seem disconnected from existing workforce programs such as CWEE and the many other successful organizations in Colorado.

Programs like CWEE place our successful graduates in companies that hire entry level workers. They receive a good entry wage averaging \$10-11 per hour with benefits. One of our employer partners is a company that hires customer service representatives to service warranty service contracts. They are a company that is actually growing at this time. They are a 24/7 business and one of the biggest obstacles to hiring CWEE participants is transportation and childcare available for nightshifts. Businesses like this one would welcome the opportunity to work with the Task Force to develop plans and coordinate efforts to expand the possibilities to improve the lives of low income people.

We must shore up our efforts in Colorado and make sure that we utilize to the best of our abilities all of the resources and opportunities that we have to help those who are most vulnerable. The Economic Opportunity Poverty Reduction Task Force will provide us with a means to achieve this important task.