

# ISSUE BRIEF no.4

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

### **A YOUNG WORKFORCE AT RISK: Reconnecting Out-of-School and Out-of-Work Youth in Maryland**

*April 24, 2009 – For more information, contact Andrea Payne at 410-234-8303 or [andrea@jotf.org](mailto:andrea@jotf.org)*

The vitality of the Maryland economy depends on the capacity of our future workforce. Many young Marylanders, however, struggle with the transition into the adult workforce. In some cases, they drop out of school and fail to achieve the basic credentials and skills required by most employers. In many more cases they simply fail to find work, whether a part-time position to start earning an income, or an entry-level job on the path to a career. Due to a combination of factors, such as low skills and limited job opportunities, in recent years youth employment has hit an all-time low.

The young Marylanders between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working are considered “disconnected.” They lack the social, academic, and employment connections that lay the foundation for a successful future. Without these connections, they are at a higher risk for engaging in destructive or anti-social behavior, and our society is at risk of losing valuable human capital. As of 2006, more than 1 in 10 young Marylanders were both out-of-school and out-of-work. <sup>1</sup>

Concerted efforts are needed to bring these young Marylanders back into the fold, with a focus on long-term employment. We must create on-ramps into the workforce and pathways to advancement, so disconnected young adults can not only find entry-level work, but also access career ladders that lead to rewarding, livable-wage jobs.

This brief makes a series of recommendations to strengthen state and local leadership, including:

- Creating more non-traditional pathways to high school graduation. Options include career academies, competency-based diploma models, evening schools, and programs infused with work-based learning.
- Increasing the availability of External Diploma, GED, and Adult Basic Education programs, and creating pathways into post-secondary education for non-traditional students.
- Facilitating cross-system collaboration and creating a streamlined data collection system to address the variety of challenges facing disconnected youth.
- Developing comprehensive youth service centers around the state, where young Marylanders can more easily access the range of services they need to get ahead.
- Expanding summer and work-based learning opportunities.

The business community, non-profits, and families must also be at the table, committing to give youth the work experiences and support systems they need to advance. Maryland must create a stronger link between education and employment, and ensure that relevant opportunities exist for youth from all walks of life. This must include opportunities for disconnected youth to re-enter school and work, achieving needed competencies and credentials.

# OUT-OF-SCHOOL + OUT-OF-WORK = AT-RISK

**As of 2006, more than 1 in 10 young Marylanders were both out-of-school and out-of-work.**

In 2006 there were about 700,000 Marylanders between the ages of 16 and 24. Almost 11 percent of them—74,000 youth—were neither working nor enrolled in school.<sup>2</sup> These young Marylanders are considered “disconnected.” Some are high school dropouts. Others may be unsuccessful in making workforce connections due to family obligations, lack of marketable employment skills, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, disability, or difficulty aging out of the foster care system.

Without aggressive interventions, many of these youth will remain at the fringes of the labor market, earning low wages if they are lucky enough to find a job, facing spells of unemployment, engaging in criminal activity, and relying on public safety nets to make ends meet. With the right mix of supports, including education and training, these youth have the capacity to make the transition into a productive adulthood.

To understand the types of interventions that will be the most effective, we must first understand the make-up of Maryland’s disconnected population. First, we know that older youth, between the ages of 20-24, are more likely to be out-of-school and out-of-work than their younger 16-19 year-old counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Since much of the younger cohort is of traditional high-school age, they are more likely to be enrolled in school.

Overall, there are very few disconnected youth with any educational experience beyond high school. As of 2000, 42 percent of all disconnected youth in the state were high school dropouts and 43 percent had no more than a high school credential. Just 15 percent had any college experience.<sup>4</sup> By 2006, youth with a high school credential or less were still about three times more likely to be disconnected than youth with at least some college.<sup>5</sup> This indicates that strategies for reconnecting youth to education must focus most heavily on alternative pathways to high school credentialing and post-secondary access for low-skill students.

## **Employment Rates for Out-of-School Maryland Youth, by Age and Education, 2006**

	Age 16-19	Age 20-24
High School Dropouts	35.2%	56.5%
High School Graduates	66.5%	75.9%

Source: Sum, March 2008

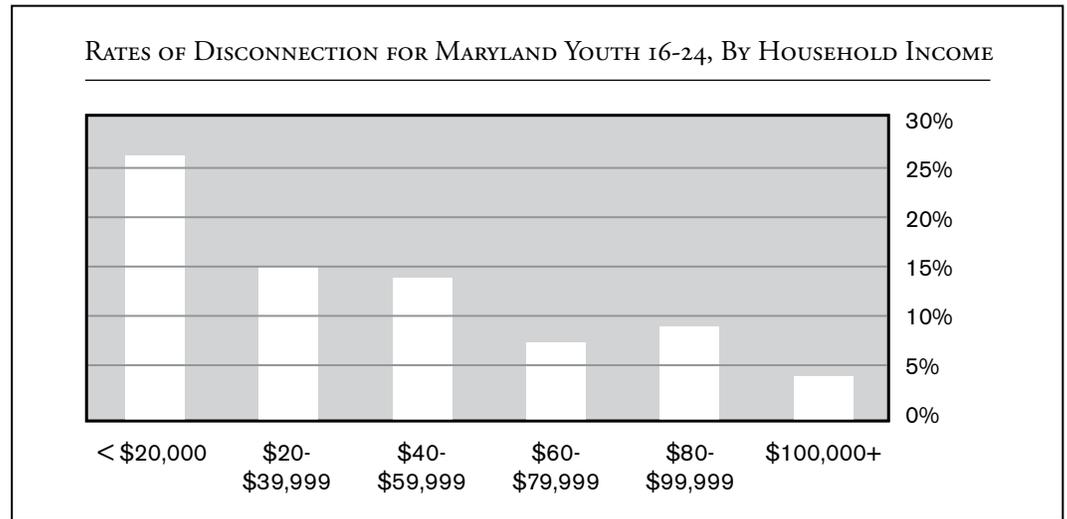
There is a strong correlation between academic achievement and youth employment. Teens that dropped out of high school have the lowest employment rate—in Maryland, just 35 percent are working. Out-of-school teens who have finished high school still struggle, but fare much better with an employment rate of 67 percent. Older out-of-school youth are more likely to be employed. Amongst 20-24 year-old high school dropouts, the employment rate is 57 percent. For those with a high school credential, the employment rate rises to 76 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Rates of disconnection vary significantly by income, race, age, and education level. As illustrated in Charts 1 and 2, youth from low-income families and older black and Hispanic youth fare the worst in Maryland. More than 1 in 4 young Marylanders from families earning less than \$20,000 are neither at work nor in school. Black and Hispanic youth are twice as likely to be out of school and out of work compared to white and Asian youth, with even larger discrepancies for older youth.

Some of Maryland’s disconnected youth are in institutional settings—jail, prison, juvenile centers, mental institutions, or nursing homes. Overall, about 2 percent of out-of-school Marylanders between the ages of 16 and 24 are in an institutional setting. Again, rates vary significantly based on education. Nearly 7 percent of those without a high school credential are incarcerated or otherwise institutionalized. There is also great variation based on gender and race. Out-of-school males are 40 times more likely to be institutionalized than out-of-school females. In 2006, 26.2 percent of black male high school dropouts were institutionalized, compared to only 3.5 percent of white male dropouts.<sup>7</sup>

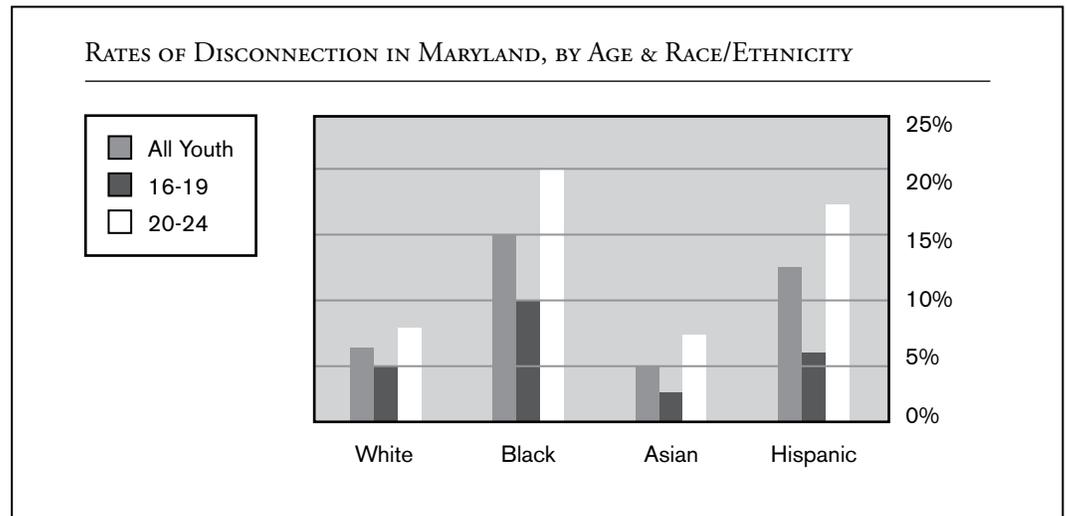
To keep at-risk youth on track, the menu of solutions must be comprehensive.

**Chart 1**



Source: Sum, March 2008

**Chart 2**



Source: Sum, March 2008

Maryland's Ready by 21™ Action Planning Team—a group convened by the Governor's Office for Children representing stakeholders from government, the education system, non-profits, and business—developed a framework for understanding the causes of youth disconnection in Maryland. Through research, interviews, and analysis based on the group's expertise, the team identified a series of barriers that prevent a smooth transition from youth to productive adulthood. These barriers include: negative attitudes and low expectations from people in positions of authority and leadership; lack of caring adult influences; lack of safe and stable housing; substance abuse and other health issues; criminal justice challenges; and

limited pathways into education and legitimate employment.<sup>8</sup>

This broad range of challenges highlights the importance of implementing solutions that link youth to multiple resources—from healthcare and housing to education and training. We must ensure that a variety of educational and career pathways are available, but academic and hard-skill interventions cannot stand alone. To keep at-risk youth on track and reconnect out-of-school youth, the menu of solutions must be comprehensive. Delivering and coordinating these supports requires the active involvement of multiple public agencies and private service-providers.

# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ON THE DECLINE

**As of 2007, the nation's teen employment rate had reached its lowest point in post-World War II history.**

To better understand the workforce challenges facing disconnected youth, it is useful to explore the employment picture on its own. As of 2007, the nation's teen employment rate had reached its lowest point in post-World War II history. Only 34.8 percent of 16-19 year olds in the country were working. The decline in youth employment has been especially pronounced in recent years, with teen employment dropping more than 10 points from 45.2 percent at the start of the decade. Young adults also fared poorly, with employment rates for 20-24 year-olds dropping four percentage points over the same period.<sup>9</sup>

Research shows that many jobless teens want to work but are unable to find suitable employment. As of 2007, 1.1 million teens across the nation were officially unemployed—that is, actively seeking but unable to find work—yielding a teen unemployment rate 15.7%. An equal number were underemployed or had given up the search.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that these statistics reflect the situation before the current economic meltdown. Youth have been living in a difficult job market for many years, with even bleaker prospects today.

The downward trend in youth employment is due in part to sluggish employment growth since the turn of the millennium. When the economy grows quickly, employers must reach further into the workforce and take on newer, less skilled workers. When demand drops, these inexperienced workers fall to the back of the line and struggle to find entry points into the workforce.<sup>11</sup>

**Employment Rate for Maryland Teens, Age 16-19, By Race/Ethnicity, 2006**

	Employment Rate
White	43.7%
Hispanic	37.7%
Black	29.7%
Asian	26.9%

Source: Sum, 2008

Amongst those who do work, earnings are significantly lower for those with more limited education. Earnings for out-of-school Maryland 18-24 year-olds range from just \$9,100 per year for high school dropouts, to \$15,200 for those with a high school credential, to as much as \$28,400 for those with a Bachelor's degree or more. Not only are earnings low for youth with limited education, but they have been decreasing over time. Earnings for out-of-school dropouts dropped 30 percent between 1999 and 2006, indicating a growing demand for higher-skilled, more educated workers.<sup>12</sup>

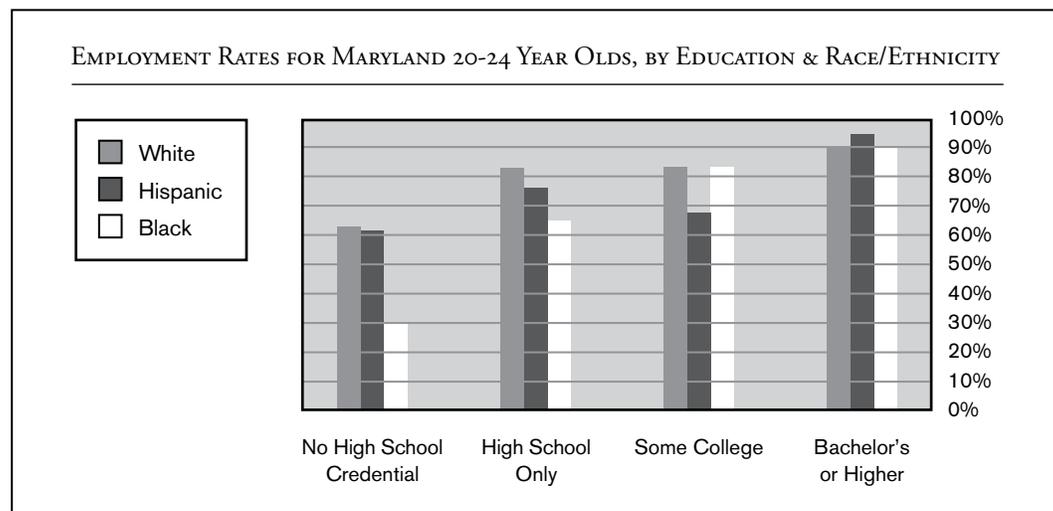
## TEEN EMPLOYMENT IN MARYLAND

The experience of young Marylanders mirrors national trends, with a 10 percent drop in teen employment between 2000 and 2007. By 2007, just over 1/3 of all teens in Maryland were employed. As a result, Maryland is now ranked 38th among the states in terms of teen employment, lagging behind neighbors such as Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

Low teen employment rates are particularly striking amongst minority teens in Maryland. In 2006, almost 44 percent of white teens were employed, compared to only 30 percent of black teens and 27 percent of Asian teens. Furthermore, 2006 marked the first time that female teen employment outpaced male teen employment. High rates of unemployment among male teens, particularly minorities, are associated with higher dropout rates and increased involvement with the criminal justice system.<sup>13</sup>

The lack of early workforce experience puts lower income and minority students at an early disadvantage.

Chart 3



Source: Sum, 2008

Underlying the racial disparity in employment is a significant variation based on household income. Amongst high school students in Maryland, those from higher income families are actually more likely to be employed than students from low-income families. Only 14 percent of students from families earning \$20,000-\$40,000 per year are employed, while 31 percent of students from families earning \$80,000-\$100,000 are employed. Even when broken down by income, however, minority students in Maryland are still falling behind. For students from the lowest income families—those earning under \$20,000 per year—the overall employment rate is 18 percent. For black teens it is only 11 percent.<sup>14</sup> The lack of early workforce experience puts lower income and minority students at an early disadvantage, leaving them with a more limited work history and fewer opportunities to build basic job skills.

### YOUNG ADULT EMPLOYMENT IN MARYLAND

Employment among young Marylanders ages 20-24 has also been on the decline since the turn of the millennium, dropping 6 percentage points by 2007. Today, about 2/3 of young adults in Maryland are employed. In contrast to trends amongst teens, young adult females faced a steeper decline in employment than males, leaving females with an employment rate of just under 64 percent in 2007, compared to a male employment rate of just over 69 percent.

As described earlier, employment rates vary based on educational experience. This is particularly true for African-American youth. Black young adults without a high school credential have an employment rate of only 32 percent. This rate doubles to 67 percent for those with a high school credential. As seen in Chart 3, employment rates for black young adults reach parity with whites and Hispanics for those with at least some college.

## MULTIPLE PATHWAYS TO A HIGH SCHOOL CREDENTIAL

---

There are a variety of program models that provide alternatives for students struggling in the traditional high school setting, or for students who have already left school and are seeking opportunities to re-connect. State leaders and local school systems must ensure that a mix of such opportunities are available to youth in all corners of the state. In addition to traditional GED programs offered through local school systems, community colleges, and non-profits, promising models include:

### **External Diploma Programs**

External Diploma Programs give adults the opportunity to earn a traditional high school diploma. The program is open to learners over the age of 18 who are not enrolled in high school. Students do self-paced work towards a diploma that draws upon life and work experiences. The diploma is awarded after the student completes a series of relevant real-life tasks and one-on-one meetings with an advisor. Successful candidates must demonstrate proficiency in a set of 65 unique competencies, which measure reading, writing, math, critical thinking, and oral communication skills.<sup>15</sup> While students must be self-directed to succeed, the flexible schedule, individualized approach, and the replacement of high-pressure testing with project-based learning makes it an ideal option for students who have struggled in traditional settings.

The program is currently offered at 15 locations in Maryland, serving 1,600 students in 2008, with 602 graduating and 795 continuing into 2009.<sup>16</sup> An analysis of Maryland EDP graduates found that within three years, their earnings increased by \$7,000.<sup>17</sup> However, since the program only receives \$280,000 per year in state funding, demand often exceeds program

capacity.<sup>18</sup> There are waiting lists in many areas, and the program is not available in Cecil, Garrett, Harford, Montgomery, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Talbot or Worcester Counties.

### **Career Academies**

Career academies prepare high school students for college and career by infusing academics with a career-oriented focus. Career academies are generally found within traditional high schools, and have three defining characteristics. First, they are built around small learning communities, where cohorts move through classes together and receive more personalized attention. Second, the college-preparatory curriculum is enriched with a career-development focus to help contextualize learning. Third, partnerships with local employers give students outside perspectives and work-based learning opportunities. A recent MDRC evaluation found that career academies increase graduates' earning power, especially for young men, without sacrificing academic preparation.<sup>19</sup> According to the Career Academy Support Network, there are career academies currently operating at 44 high schools in Maryland.

### **Diploma Plus Programs**

The Diploma Plus model was first developed in 1996 by the Commonwealth Corporation in Boston. The program creates small, performance-based schools that target students in urban areas who are either at-risk, over-age or under-credited. Rather than moving through grades based on age and credits, students move through three unique program phases—Foundation, Presentation, and Plus. In the first two phases, students complete projects with clear content objectives. Students advance from one

level to the next based on competency demonstrated through these projects. In the Plus Phase, learning moves beyond the high school setting as students enroll in college courses, participate in internships, or develop community projects.

An evaluation found that the program has a positive impact on a range of student outcomes, including engagement, academic performance, and college attendance.<sup>20</sup> Two Diploma Plus schools are scheduled to open in Baltimore in 2009. A Diploma Plus option is also offered at the Baltimore Career Academy, where students can complete high school while earning Baltimore City Community College credits.

### **Bridge Programs**

For youth who have already left school and moved into the workforce, the notion of going back to complete an academic program can be overwhelming. For many, the desire for more education is driven by career aspirations. Bridge programs are one way to help students move more smoothly through the education continuum and into better jobs, by simultaneously providing basic skills instruction and workforce skills training. Unlike the traditional college model where remedial coursework must be completed first, the bridge model lets students complete developmental education or GED preparation as they work towards some type of career certification. Washington state's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training program (I-BEST) is a robust model that provides students at 32 community colleges with basic education and career training in fields from healthcare to automotive repair.<sup>21</sup>

# POLICIES FOR RE-CONNECTION

---

## Maryland must expand its efforts to re-connect youth who have left the traditional K-12 system.

Tapping into the potential of disconnected youth presents a major opportunity for Maryland, in terms of increasing individual success and independence, and in terms of maximizing the state's economic potential. Through effective second-chance programs, Maryland can help all youth find their talents, build skills, and enter stable career paths. However, by nature of being both out-of-school and out-of-work, disconnected youth are inherently hard-to-serve. Often policy solutions focus on reducing the problem while youth are still connected—usually, this means through the education system. Dropout prevention is a major focus at the state level and in many counties. In Baltimore City, a Dropout Prevention & Recovery Taskforce is looking head-on at what can be done to keep youth engaged.

There is good reason for stopping the problem at the source to remain high on the priority list for state and local leaders. For every 100 Marylanders that begin the 9th grade at a Maryland public high school, only 74 go on graduate.<sup>22</sup> Data shows that as adults, full-time workers who dropped out earn about \$8,600 less per year than workers with a high school credential. Those who fail to complete high

school also face higher rates of unemployment (9.0% in 2008, versus just 5.7% for workers with a high school credential).<sup>23</sup> Dropouts are also at high risk for encounters with the criminal justice system.

Dropout prevention is and must remain a priority. Our public schools must revisit their curriculum and offer more options to students, increase opportunities to combine academics with experience in the workplace, and create more flexible scheduling alternatives to accommodate students with family obligations. In addition, Maryland must strengthen and expand its efforts to re-connect youth who have already left the traditional K-12 system. Despite the presence of in-school interventions and supports, outside life events often intervene. Many youth need second-chance on-ramps into education and career advancement.

The Youth Opportunity (YO) Baltimore program is one successful model that helps out-of-school youth create pathways into the workforce. YO targets city youth between ages 16 and 22, and helps create an Individual Opportunity Plan for each participant. Through the program, youth can take part in job readiness and hard-skill training programs, while at the same time

## YOUTH FUNDING THROUGH THE FEDERAL RECOVERY ACT

---

The current recession has had a heavy impact on disadvantaged populations, including disconnected youth. Employment opportunities are limited for workers at all skill levels, making it particularly difficult for low-skill and inexperienced workers to find jobs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, passed in February 2009, provides a one-time infusion of funding with large sums to be used to assist these groups. Through the Recovery Act, Maryland will be able to expand programs for at-risk and disconnected youth in the state.

Maryland will receive \$29 million in Workforce Investment Act funding, with \$11.7 million designated for youth services.<sup>24</sup> States are encouraged to use these funds for high-quality summer work experiences. Thirty percent of funds must be spent on out-of-school youth. While previously the funds could only be used to serve youth 21 or under, the Recovery Act expanded eligibility for youth up to age 24.

## To build a strong future workforce we must create programs and safety nets that meet the needs of all youth.

participating in pre-GED, GED, or courses towards a diploma. An evaluation of the program found that participants see a significant increase in both wages and labor force attachment. Relative to a comparison group, YO participants earn 44% more and work 42% more often.<sup>25</sup>

Also in Baltimore, Civic Works offers workforce development programs targeting low-skilled youth. Their programs, such as YouthBuild, the Conservation Leadership Corps and the Healthcare Careers Alliance, give young city residents the opportunity to build hard skills and serve the community. Simultaneously, Civic Works helps young participants work to complete their GEDs and build basic employment skills.

These are a just few local examples of strategies for serving disconnected youth, but much work remains to be done. Leadership is needed at the state level to bring action behind Governor Martin O'Malley's notion of "no spare Marylander," and localities must make a commitment to maximizing the potential of youth at the margins—continuing to focus on those who are still engaged but at-risk, and then going further to consider those who have already fallen through the cracks. So what are the next steps for Maryland?

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ACTION

Public officials and policymakers must make at-risk and disconnected youth a priority. To build a strong future workforce we must create programs and safety nets that meet the needs of all youth, particularly those facing barriers to success. As a first step, Maryland leaders should re-frame the conversation around youth pathways before graduation and after high school. Too often we make a distinction between college prep and employment tracks. Instead, state leaders and school administrators should encourage all students look at their future from a

career development perspective. As a state, Maryland must promote, validate, and equally support all pathways into the workforce. There are concrete steps the state can take to re-connect youth:

- **Maryland should expand availability of External Diploma, GED, and Adult Basic Education courses.** A Jobs for the Future study found that nearly 60 percent of youth who drop out of school eventually go back to acquire a high school equivalency, and the Center for Law and Social Policy found that 40 percent of drop outs are interested in pursuing post-secondary education.<sup>26, 27</sup> This indicates that high school dropouts have both the drive and the academic capacity to build an educational foundation. Maryland does not invest enough to meet the demand for adult education, leading to perennial waiting lists of around 5,000 people.<sup>28</sup> Expanding access to must become a priority.
- **Maryland must create and expand pathways into post-secondary education for non-traditional students.** Finding funding, building a support system, and developing the study skills to succeed in postsecondary education and training can be challenging even for students going directly from high school to college. For disconnected youth, these challenges are vastly magnified. Maryland must reform its systems for delivering financial aid, developmental education, and student supports to improve outcomes for students at all skill levels.
- **State leaders should facilitate the cross-system collaboration needed to address the variety of challenges facing disconnected youth.** Reintegrating disconnected youth cannot be seen as only an education problem or a workforce problem. Youth often face a range of obstacles: health, housing, substance abuse, disability, or the

## Expanding youth services, outreach, and coordination should be a top priority amongst state agencies.

lack of a support system of caring adults. In fact, a survey by the Government Accountability Office found that the biggest gaps reported by youth service providers are a lack of housing and mental health services.<sup>29</sup> State agencies should be given the charge and the resources to increase collaboration. Expanding youth services, outreach, and coordination should be a top priority amongst state agencies.

- **Maryland must develop a streamlined data collection system** that allows providers in multiple fields to share information and track the progress of youth in the state. Such a system would facilitate better coordination between state agencies and private service providers, and would promote a more holistic approach to youth services. It would also allow for better analysis of what is effective and where there are gaps.

Other states have implemented models that could guide Maryland in this process. Florida has implemented a K-20 Education Data Warehouse, and under a legislative charge to increase collaboration, the state's Children and Youth Cabinet is currently working to develop an even broader inter-agency data sharing system. The K-20 data system facilitates longitudinal analyses of Florida students by creating a single source of information on demographics, enrollment, test scores, financial aid, and employment.<sup>30</sup> The system under development will help state agencies provide higher quality, more integrated services.<sup>31</sup>

- **The state should expand support for summer and work-based learning programs.** In 2008, Maryland established the Civic Justice Corps, a program that engaged underserved and court-involved youth in paid work experiences at state parks. Programs like this help youth build work skills and confidence while earning a small income. Maryland should

### EXPANDING POST-SECONDARY PATHWAYS FOR LOW-SKILL MARYLANDERS

---

While post-secondary education is increasingly important in today's knowledge economy, many Marylanders struggle to access and succeed in college. Our state policies are largely geared towards students following the traditional path from high school straight to college, which makes it especially challenging for low-skill and non-traditional students.

For many Marylanders, cost is a key barrier. The National Report Card on Higher Education has given Maryland an 'F' in affordability since 2004. State leaders must make it a priority to hold the line on tuition and increase the availability of need-based aid, particularly for part-time students.

Many students enter college with limited academic skills, and struggle to complete the developmental coursework required as a first step towards a degree. At community colleges, nearly three-quarters of all students must take at least one developmental course, and after four years, only 26 percent of them have graduated or transferred. Leadership and state support for innovation are needed to help students overcome this hurdle.

For more information, please see the Job Opportunities Task Force report "Patching the Leaky Pipeline: Helping Low-Skill Marylanders Access & Succeed in College."

**While many dropouts go on to attain a high school credential, they often remain unprepared for post-secondary success.**

expand these types of options for at-risk youth around the state, including opportunities during the school year.

- **Maryland must ensure that it is effectively serving youth in and transitioning out of state custody.** Without thorough planning and ongoing supports, youth aging out of foster care and leaving the juvenile justice system often struggle to move into careers and post-secondary education. These systems should be infused with comprehensive supports that include a workforce focus.

In partnership with foundations, local government, and non-profit service providers, the state should expand programs that target youth with criminal records. In Baltimore, Living Classrooms Foundation serves young ex-offenders through its Fresh Start Program. The program provides 40 weeks of job training and academic development to out-of-school youth ages 16-19. In addition to gaining employability skills and paid employment, participants increase their academic skills by an average of 1.5 grade levels. Graduates receive three years of aftercare including case management and support services. Aftercare statistics consistently show that 78-81 percent of Fresh Start graduates are still employed and/or continuing their education after three years.<sup>32</sup> These types of intensive models can have a positive impact on youth and on local communities through reduced recidivism. Maryland must commit to the up-front investment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL ACTION**

While leadership, coordination, and resources are needed at the state level, there is much to be done at the local level. Programs serving at-risk and disconnected youth are largely non-traditional; built on innovation, trial, and gradual improvement. Those working with youth on the ground are best suited to develop and test new ideas.

Implementation of alternative pathways for at-risk and disconnected youth must become a priority for local leaders. There is also a strong role for foundations to play on the local level. By targeting resources to programs that serve disconnected youth, funders can spur innovation and facilitate the replication of successful strategies.

- **School districts should create more non-traditional pathways focused on the workforce needs of students.** Options include career academies, Diploma Plus schools, competency-based diploma models, evening schools, and programs infused with work-based learning. There is no single model that will effectively serve all youth. Every school district must make multiple options available to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to thrive.

To facilitate this, and ensure that it remains a priority, school districts should consider creating special divisions focused on non-traditional pathways to academic completion. In 2005, the New York City Department of Education established an Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation to focus on programs for overage and under-credited students. The Office has developed a series of programs and special schools for students who are at-risk or have already dropped out. Creating a division focused exclusively on multiple pathways ensures that the issue remains a priority, and allows school system staff to develop expertise on the issue.

Maryland must make it a priority to create pathways where education and employment are strongly linked.

- **Local leaders should work with community colleges to develop programs aimed at disconnected youth, including dropouts.** While many dropouts go on to attain a high school credential, they often remain unprepared for post-secondary success. About 60% of dropouts with a high school credential eventually enroll in a degree or certificate program, but only 9% complete their degree and 23% complete their certificate.<sup>33</sup> Bridge programs and programs that combine basic education with workforce training can help move students with limited academic background and skills more smoothly into post-secondary education and better jobs. There are also innovative community college programs geared towards current high school students that in some cases can be adapted to meet the needs of out-of-school youth. Examples include dual enrollment and middle colleges.<sup>34</sup>

- **Local government should facilitate the development and expansion of youth service centers,** following the model of Baltimore's YO Centers. By creating hubs in local communities, youth can more easily access the range of services they need to get ahead. By bringing multiple resources to one location, multiple problems can be addressed at once, and individuals are less likely to get lost in the shuffle or become overwhelmed by the question of where to start.

Maryland must make it a priority to create pathways where education and employment are strongly linked. With a clear vision, strong business partnerships, and a firm commitment from state and local leaders, Maryland can help the state's 1 in 10 out-of-school, out-of-work youth reconnect and progress towards rewarding careers. We must work now to expand pathways to advancement, or we will find ourselves playing catch up for yet another generation.

## About JOTF

The mission of JOTF is to develop and advocate policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-skill, low-income workers and job seekers.

## Contact Us

231 East Baltimore Street, Suite 1102  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
(410) 234-8040  
(410) 234-8929 fax  
[www.jotf.org](http://www.jotf.org)

- 1 Sum, Andrew, et al. "Developments in the Teen and Young Adult Labor Market in Maryland, 2000-2007: Implications for Workforce Development Policy." Report prepared for the Job Opportunities Task Force, March 2008.
- 2 Ibid
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Sum, Andrew. "Challenges and Policy Options: Labor Market Conditions Among 16-24 Year-Old Young Adults in Maryland and the Baltimore PMSA." August 2001.
- 5 Sum, March 2008.
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Ready by 21 Planning Team. "Youth Ready by 21: A 5-Year Action Agenda for Maryland." October 2007.
- 9 Sum, March 2008.
- 10 Sum, Andrew, et al. "The Collapse of the National Teen Job Market and the Case for An Immediate Youth Jobs Creation Program." February 2008.
- 11 Ibid
- 12 Sum, March 2008.
- 13 Ibid
- 14 Ibid
- 15 For more detail on the National External Diploma Program, visit <https://www.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=nedp.welcome>
- 16 Program data obtained from Maryland State Department of Education on 03/30/2009.
- 17 Maryland State Department of Education. "Report of the Maryland Adult External High School Diploma Program Evaluation." December 2005.
- 18 Maryland Department of Budget and Management. "FY 2010 Proposed Operating Budget Detail"
- 19 Kemple, James J. "Career Academies: Long-Term Impacts on Labor Market Outcomes, Educational Attainment, and Transitions to Adulthood." MDRC, June 2008.
- 20 Commonwealth Corporation. "Diploma Plus- Sampling of Outcome and Impact Data from March, 2008 Report to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation." March 2008.
- 21 Washington Community and Technical Colleges. "Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)." December 2008.
- 22 The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. "Progress and Completion: Student Pipeline - Transition and Completion Rates from 9th Grade to College, 2006." Available online at <http://higheredinfo.org/>. [Accessed 03/2008].
- 23 Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Population Survey 2008.
- 24 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: State-By-State Estimates of Key Provisions Affecting Low- and Moderate-Income Individuals, Training and Employment Services." February 25, 2009.
- 25 YO! Baltimore. "Changing Minds, Changing Lives: Baltimore's Youth Opportunity Study." 2007.
- 26 Almeida, Cheryl, Cassius Johnson and Adria Steinberg. "Making Good on a Promise: What Policymakers Can Do to Support the Educational Persistence of Dropouts." Jobs for the Future, April 2006.
- 27 Harris, Linda and Evelyn Ganzglass. "Creating Post-Secondary Pathways to Good Jobs for High School Dropouts: The Possibilities and Challenges." Center for American Progress, October 2008.
- 28 Maryland Adult Literacy Resource Center. "Maryland Adult Education: Quick Facts FY07"
- 29 Government Accountability Office. "Disconnected Youth: Federal Action Could Address Some of the Challenges Faced by Local Programs That Reconnect Youth to Employment and Education." February 2008.
- 30 See <http://edwapp.doe.state.fl.us/doi/> for more information on the Florida K-20 Education Data Warehouse
- 31 See [http://www.flgov.com/youth\\_cabinet\\_datasharing](http://www.flgov.com/youth_cabinet_datasharing) for more information on Children and Youth Cabinet Data and Information Sharing System
- 32 See the Living Classrooms Foundation website for more detail: [http://www.livingclassrooms.org/employ\\_fresh.html](http://www.livingclassrooms.org/employ_fresh.html)
- 33 Almeida.
- 34 For more information, see Harris/Ganzglass.