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## **Report highlights city's work force training needs**

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Over one-third of the city's working population does not have the qualifications to apply for almost half of the new jobs that will be created by 2010, according to a report released by the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board at a forum Tuesday.

At the forum, the board, appointed by Mayor Martin O'Malley to oversee investment of federal work force funds, explained why an increase in funds to the city's work force system is needed to employ the more than 132,000 unqualified residents.

"Baltimore serves a large number of people in jobs but a smaller amount of people can get the training," said Deborah Povich, executive director of Job Opportunities Task Force.

The city's main work force program -- called One-Stop Career Center Network -- served more than 21,361 job-seekers. Composed of three services -- core, intensive and training -- more people exit the program after the first service and did not receive the training that could increase their income.

In comparison with other local work force systems, the city scored the second-worst retention percentages out of 14 cities. Only St. Louis was worse.

Fifty percent of people exit the city's program after the core, or initial stage, and only 15 percent stay until the much-needed training stage. Successful cities such as Philadelphia had 10 percent exit at the initial stage and 90 percent make it to the training stage.

With the skills learned in the initial stage, residents have access to job listings and other career information and with intensive services, the customers can work with a case manager for job preparation and placement service. But with the training services, the customer can get individual training supported by employers that guarantee employment for those who complete the program.

Still, a Baltimore resident involved with the work force system considers the program very effective.

Before Monique St. Lawrence Carter, 36, went through the training services, she described her previous work history as being unemployed or underemployed, never making more than \$24,000 a year. Now, after going through the training services, she has a job as a paralegal.

"I think it's an outstanding program," she said.

Chris Thompson, the lead author on the report and a speaker at the forum, could not pinpoint the exact cause of the low retention rate in the program, but believes there should be a change.

"Core services is not enough," he said. "There is a shift in the economy where higher education is essential."

In his report, Thompson further explained why more residents needed to go through the training. Of those individuals involved in the program, 73 percent reported having a high school diploma/GED are better, but less than half of those tested scored at the 12th grade level in reading and math.

Also, the report showed the program to be cost effective as a return on taxpayer's investments. An analysis of 216 trainees showed a wage gain of \$2.20 for every \$1 invested in the training.

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