

Join JOTF at Our Next Event

## Investing in Baltimore's Workforce: LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITY & MOVING TO SCALE



**Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>**  
2–3:30pm

UB Student Center  
21 W. Mt Royal Avenue, Baltimore, MD  
Bogomolny Room (5th Floor)  
Visit <http://investinginbaltimore.eventbrite.com> to register.

JOTF is a 501c(3) non-profit organization. If you would like to support our efforts to help low-income workers and job seekers please contact [emily@jotf.org](mailto:emily@jotf.org) or call **410-234-8040**.

### Meet Our Board and Staff:

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**Matt Stubbs**, Program Manager

**Jessica Traskey**, Finance & Grants Manager

**Emily Ward**, Administrative Assistant

**Caryn York**, Policy Associate

# Job Opportunities Task Force

## JOTF Works

Spring 2013

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAPS WITH VICTORIES FOR JOTF, MORE WORK AHEAD

By Sarah Breitenbach

JOTF recently wrapped up its work in Annapolis for the Maryland General Assembly's annual legislative session. The 90-day trek proved a long, but rewarding one for JOTF, which came to the table with more than a handful of priorities for lawmakers to consider. A few of our priorities failed to progress and will be revisited in the 2014 session, but we do have several victories to celebrate this year.

After four years of hard work, JOTF, along with our reentry partners succeeded in passing legislation to "Ban the Box," a move that eliminates the question regarding previous criminal convictions from state job applications. With Gov. O'Malley's signature, Maryland becomes the eighth state to remove the question and improve job opportunities for people with criminal records who desperately want to reenter the workforce. JOTF thanks bill sponsors Senator Catherine Pugh and Delegate James Proctor for their ongoing leadership and support of this legislation.

We were happy to help champion legislation from the governor's office that created a budget allocation to support sector-based workforce partnerships between nonprofit organizations and businesses. The Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Program directs \$4.5 million to these partnerships to build training and educational programs geared toward employer needs. It will largely benefit adults who want to improve their skills in selected, growing business areas that have a demand for workers.

JOTF also eagerly supported the governor's plan to help propel Maryland residents into high-wage jobs that support their families. Gov. O'Malley's budget included an additional \$1 million to support adult education programs and \$500,000 to offset costs for Marylanders taking graduate equivalency exams.

### Other JOTF priorities in 2013 included:

**Earned Sick and Safe Leave Act:** JOTF and the Working Matters coalition led the charge on legislation that would enable Maryland workers to earn paid sick leave from their employer based on the number of hours they work. More than 700,000 of our neighbors cannot earn paid leave to use when they or a family member are sick and this significantly impacts the economic security of families all over our state. The bill did not advance out of its respective committees, but is expected to reemerge in 2014. For more information about Working Matters and the Maryland Campaign for Paid Sick Days, contact Melissa Broome at [Melissa@jotf.org](mailto:Melissa@jotf.org) or **410-234-8046**. You can also keep up to date on the campaign at [www.facebook.com/workingmatters](http://www.facebook.com/workingmatters).

**Shielding of Nonviolent Convictions:** Jobs are critical to our economic recovery and the ability to secure employment is crucial to the successful

Photo: Jay Baker, Governor's Press Office



JOTF Senior Policy Associate Melissa Broome (second row, third from left) stands with other supporters of the Maryland Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Program. Gov. Martin O'Malley signed the legislation into law April 9.

reentry of people with criminal records. This legislation, which would have shielded certain nonviolent misdemeanor convictions from public view, failed when the House and Senate could not reach a compromise on the final day of session. Eliminating the opportunity to discriminate against job applicants based on certain public criminal records would be a significant first step in improving opportunities for this population. The bill's failure was a disappointment, but we expect to revisit this legislation next year as well. For more information, contact Caryn York at [Caryn@jotf.org](mailto:Caryn@jotf.org) or **443-692-9424**.

**Economic Inclusion Plans – Construction Contracts:** This bill would have helped Maryland build a stronger workforce development pipeline to connect disadvantaged workers directly to jobs by requiring the Board of Public Works to approve economic inclusion plans for certain state procurement contracts. The legislation would have significantly transformed local economies and communities, but it received an unfavorable report from the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

**Casino Hiring for People with Criminal Records:** As expanded gambling gets underway in Maryland, it is important to ensure that Maryland residents have access to job opportunities at the new state-licensed casinos. Another successful legislative push, this law amends gaming regulations by prohibiting the disqualification of a prospective employee based on a conviction of a crime of moral turpitude or gambling. Gov. O'Malley signed this legislation into law on April 9.

**GED Eligibility Requirements:** Education is critical to earning a family-sustaining wage and we must ensure that adult workers in search of additional credentials are not discouraged by unnecessary and time-consuming barriers. This law removes the three-month state residency requirement that people must meet in order to receive a high school diploma by examination. The bill passed both chambers and is expected to be signed into law by Gov. O'Malley.

# JUMPSTART MARKS 20<sup>TH</sup> CLASS, EXPANDS TO BALTIMORE'S WEST SIDE, CONSTRUCTION TRAINING PROGRAM LAUNCHES 'BRIDGE' MATH COURSE

By Matt Stubbs & Sarah Breitenbach

**Project JumpStart**, JOTF's construction training program, is growing substantially. We are expanding JumpStart as we open the class to more students than ever, target specific Baltimore neighborhoods for career development, graduate our milestone 20<sup>th</sup> class, and shepherd students through our transitional math class, Bridge.

In January we happily announced a new partnership with the University Maryland Baltimore and the developers working on a new proton treatment center in the University's growing BioPark. The University and developers Signet Development and Haskell, provided the funding to support four students from the neighborhoods around the BioPark in a JumpStart class. It is our hope that these students will ultimately be placed in careers that support their families and improve their communities.

The four students selected were part of our 20<sup>th</sup> JumpStart class, a significant milestone for the 7-year-old program. To celebrate, we hosted a special graduation event April 17 to recognize the more than 360 students who have completed the program, as well as the people who make JumpStart possible.

As we approached the start of this noteworthy class, it became increasingly clear that JOTF could help even more Baltimore residents by expanding the JumpStart program. To that end, we launched the first JumpStart course in the Mondawmin neighborhood of west Baltimore in mid-March.

## PROJECT JUMPSTART BY THE NUMBERS:

Program Inception: **January 2006**  
Graduates: **365**  
Job Placements: **253**  
Average Wage: **\$12.20/hour**

With funding for the new location from Bank of America and a partnership with the Center for Urban Families, we'll be able to train more people than ever and hope that our efforts can contribute to offsetting the 19.8 percent unemployment rate on Baltimore's west side. Students in the new class receive the same excellent instruction and job placement services we offer at our east side facility. We are confident we can put more Baltimore residents to work as our reputation as a reliable training resource continues to grow.

Photo: Melissa Broome, JOTF



Cousins and JumpStart graduates Terndaric Epps (Class 18), Jerrod Taylor (Class 20) and Jaron Taylor (Class 16) gather at the JumpStart 20th Graduation celebration April 17 in Baltimore.

One of the keys to growing that reputation has been our consistent attention to the existing and potential abilities of our students. Knowing that not all students come to JumpStart with the math skills needed to complete basic construction assignments, in January 2012 we launched Bridge, a straightforward, two-night math class.

As word of success through JumpStart spread around the city, more residents began applying to our program, but many were denied entry because of their low scores on our math test. We hypothesized that JumpStart was potentially passing over applicants who would otherwise make great candidates, but had forgotten required math skills. After completing three Bridge classes in 2012, the results strongly indicate that mediocre math skills do not define a student. All 32 students enrolled in Bridge Program have moved through to the JumpStart class.

We're incredibly proud of our students' successes and look forward to the challenge and the opportunity to put people in construction jobs that provide life sustaining wages. If you would like to learn more about Project JumpStart contact program manager Matt Stubbs at 410-234-8931.

# JOTF LAUNCHES TRAIN BALTIMORE NEW WEBSITE CONNECTS WORKERS WITH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

By Andrea Roethke

## TRAIN BALTIMORE BUILD YOUR SKILLS, FIND YOUR PATH TRAINBALTIMORE.ORG

In November 2012 JOTF launched TrainBaltimore.org, a website that connects local residents to training and employment resources in and around the city. In today's economy, workers with limited education and few marketable vocational skills are increasingly squeezed out of jobs – particularly stable, good-paying jobs. Often residents don't know where to turn to get effective help building the skills they need to advance, and find themselves in a frustrating job search. Train Baltimore helps close this information gap, and includes many of the resources potential workers need to make an informed choice about career training.

Train Baltimore is a user-friendly website with a searchable database of free and low-cost training opportunities. It helps residents compare programs and answer basic questions about eligibility, cost, enrollment, and outcomes. The website is home to detailed information on nearly 150 occupational training programs in and around the city, bringing information that was once scattered and hard to find to one central location.

While Train Baltimore's main goal is to connect Baltimore residents to training opportunities that will help them advance in the workforce, the website also houses other valuable information on workforce resources and services that can support job seekers striving to get ahead. In addition to the searchable database of training, other sections of the website connect residents to:

- GED programs and English language classes
- Information on college degree programs
- Job placement and job readiness services
- Career exploration resources
- Other community services focused on financial stability, legal services, and more

JOTF unveiled Train Baltimore at a press conference hosted in partnership with Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED). The launch event featured a variety of speakers – from those involved in providing training, to those who have benefited from quality programs.

Mayor Rawlings-Blake spoke of ways that Train Baltimore will advance the city's workforce.

"Train Baltimore is a vital new resource that gives the unemployed and underemployed essential information about affordable career training options," she said. "Thanks to the Job Opportunities Task Force for managing this project, which complements our city-wide efforts to link citizens to programs that build their workforce development skills and help them obtain sustainable employment."

MOED Director Karen Sitnick spoke about her agency's role operating Baltimore City's the One-Stop Career Centers, and how they will partner with JOTF to connect workers to training. MOED promotes Train Baltimore to the thousands of job seekers who benefit from a variety of workforce development services at the centers.

Donald Fry, President and CEO of the Greater Baltimore Committee, spoke of the value of training to local employers. Lisa Rusyniak, President & CEO of Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, and Sr. Patricia McLaughlin, Executive Director of the Caroline Center, spoke about their experience as workforce development providers and the importance of building a well-connected workforce. Trainees from each organization spoke about how enrolling in the right program helped advance their careers and achieve their goals.

Since the launch in November, JOTF has worked diligently with community leaders and social service organizations to inform local residents about Train Baltimore. Word is quickly spreading about the site, which garners more than 800 online visits each month. Training program officials have also told us that Train Baltimore directly impacts their recruitment efforts and many new students come to them via our portal.

JOTF will work hard in the coming months to get the word out, and we are eager to work with partners in all corners of the community. We hope that Train Baltimore can be a useful resource, not just for residents seeking training, but for providers seeking to streamline their recruitment and referral process, and local businesses seeking partnerships with agencies that screen and train skilled workers.

Visit [www.TrainBaltimore.org](http://www.TrainBaltimore.org) today to learn more!

## HELP SPREAD THE WORD!

We need your help to get the word out about Train Baltimore. Here are some ways you can help:

- Visit the site: [TrainBaltimore.org](http://TrainBaltimore.org) to see what it has to offer
- Make space for fliers or a poster directing your clients to the site
- Contact us about placing an article, announcement, or ad in your next newsletter
- Invite us to share information at a career fair or community event
- Bring us in to provide a site walk-through to your staff, showing them what's available and how the site can help them in their work

To talk more about how we can partner to get the word out, please contact Regina Chandler at [reginajotf@gmail.com](mailto:reginajotf@gmail.com)