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Governor Baker Signs Executive Order to Target Chronic Unemployment

Task Force to Present Strategic Plan to the Governor by November

BOSTON – Today, Governor Charlie Baker signed an Executive Order to establish a task force on Economic Opportunity for Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment. The task force, chaired by Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Ron Walker will lay out a strategic plan to address chronic unemployment among specific target populations. The Secretaries of Housing and Economic Development, Education, Health and Human Services and Veterans' Services, the Director of Access and Opportunity and members of the community appointed by the governor will also serve on the eight month task force.

"Chronically unemployed populations and regions of our Commonwealth require collaboration with our educators and business community to break down the barriers to economic growth and job creation for everyone," **said Governor Baker**. "Too many Massachusetts workers have become discouraged as a growing economy unfortunately leaves them behind. This task force will build upon the workforce development practices we know work and replicate them across the Commonwealth to create more opportunities for employment everywhere."

The task force will be charged with focusing on "target populations" facing chronically high unemployment. African Americans, Hispanic or Latino Americans, certain groups of veterans, and persons with disabilities continue to see higher than average annual unemployment rates between 7 and 12 percent despite an annual average state unemployment rate of 5.8 percent.

"For too long, the target populations have suffered from chronically high rates of unemployment," **said Secretary Ronald Walker**. "The task force is charged with understanding how best to reshape our public workforce system to meet the needs of

the target population and how best to assist individuals in achieving their goals of meaningful employment."

The task force will meet to study and identify the challenges in the target populations seeking work, review current workforce development practices, recommend strategies to reduce barriers to employment, and develop goals for recommended programs, policies, and practice. They will actively gather input from community-based organizations, business leaders, local officials and advocates. The task force will make policy recommendations to the governor by November 15, 2015, and shall terminate thirty days following the presentation of that plan to the Governor's Office for review and policies that can be implemented within state government.

"Every day, we see individuals overcome major obstacles to employment success with the right mix of training, supports, job placement, and belief in their capabilities," **said Jerry Rubin, the CEO of Jewish Vocational Services who will be a member of the task force.** "The Commonwealth and our leading employers need their talent, and these individuals deserve the opportunity to succeed."

Governor's Task Force on Economic Opportunity for Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment (*Members Named To Date*)

Ron Walker, Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development
Chair

Jay Ash, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development

Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education

Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Francisco Urena, Secretary of Veterans' Services

Jabes Rojas, Incoming-Deputy Chief of Staff for Access and Opportunity

Anthony Benoit, President, Ben Franklin Institute of Technology

Gerald Chertavian, Founder and CEO, Year-Up

Gregg Croteau, Executive Director, United Teen Equality Center (UTEC)

Donna Cupelo, Region President – New England, Verizon

Michael Fitzpatrick, Superintendent Director, Blackstone Valley Technical High School

Deborah Hicks, Senior Vice President for Human Resources, Dana Farber Cancer
Institute

Mark Isenberg, VP for Workforce Development and Technology Services, Action for
Boston Community Development

William Kiernan, Dean, UMass Boston School for Global Inclusion and Social
Development

Jerry Rubin, President and CEO, Jewish Vocational Services of Greater Boston

The establishment of the task force on Economic Opportunity for Populations Facing Chronically High Rates of Unemployment follows Governor Baker's [elevation of the Office of Access and Opportunity \(OAO\)](#) to his office under the direction of a Deputy Chief of Staff and the creation of a Steering Committee for Access and Opportunity to increase diversity and inclusion within state government and the commonwealth's procurement process. Governor Baker also signed an [executive order establishing a Workforce Skills Cabinet](#) bringing together officials and advocates for education, labor and economic development to address the growing skills gap between workers and potential employers. The task force strategic plan will inform the Workforce Skills Cabinet on-going work and is a deep dive into Massachusetts unemployment data highlighting our commitment to fostering an inclusive economic landscape.

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