

CHAPTER 5. ADVANCING TO A STRONGER WORKING MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi's labor force remains one of the state's greatest assets. However, the last ten years have made many Mississippi workers and their families feel less secure. As Mississippi's economy, jobs and workforce recover from the two recessions of the last decade, the state has the opportunity to ensure that all employers, workers and families can advance and prosper. To this end, a variety of strategies can be implemented statewide through the state's leadership in the private, public and non-profit spheres.

INCREASE EMPHASIS ON REGIONAL SECTOR INITIATIVES

Employers need skilled workers and access to quality training for their current employees. The state's workforce also needs training to access employment with sufficient wages. Mississippi has already experienced success through sector initiatives, but a greater emphasis and more resources are needed. Further developing these efforts with state support can connect more working adults with the training and wrap-around support services they need to raise skills and gain higher wage employment.

KEEP POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AFFORDABLE

Ensuring that tuition is affordable for all students is becoming increasingly important for keeping the doors of higher education open to the state's workforce and recent high school graduates alike.

SUPPORT WEALTH CREATION AND ASSET BUILDING

Building assets and saving for higher education, emergencies and homeownership are important tools for growing wealth and creating income mobility across generations. Making more alternatives to highcost financial services available, strengthening consumer protections, enhancing access to financial education and connecting more unbanked families with financial institutions can all help increase wealth building among Mississippi's households.

BUILD A PIPELINE FROM BASIC EDUCATION TO COLLEGE COURSES

The state stands to gain from better connecting basic skills education, GED preparation, workforce training and college courses. Improving the design of courses, so they stack in pathways from basic skills to post-secondary training, can advance more working adults without a high school degree onto a path to job opportunities with higher wages.

STRENGTHEN WORK SUPPORTS

For many adults, working full-time is not enough to provide for all the basic needs of their families. Adults in low-wage jobs need a variety of work supports to make ends meet. To assist these families, Mississippi needs to increase funding for affordable housing, childcare and energy assistance. Doing so helps ensure that parents can work and provide a safe, healthy environment for their families.

RESTORE PUBLIC STRUCTURES BY REFORMING TAX SYSTEM

Public investments should provide a quality education for all students, a healthy workforce and an infrastructure for business development that creates more jobs with quality wages. Ways to increase revenue, including adding new brackets to the income tax, closing corporate loopholes, and broadening the sales tax base to include more services, need to be considered to lift Mississippi and its workforce to greater economic competitiveness.

MORE MISSISSIPPI ECONOMIC POLICY CENTER RESOURCES

for advancing the State of Working Mississippi

- 1) MAKING MISSISSIPPI COMPETITIVE: SOLUTIONS FOR BUILDING ASSETS IN LOW-WEALTH COMMUNITIES
- 2) BUILDING PATHWAYS TO CREDENTIALS AND CAREERS
- 3) BASIC ECONOMIC SECURITY TABLES FOR MISSISSIPPI
- 4) AFTER THE ARRA: SETTING PRIORITIES FOR KEEPING MISSISSIPPI'S RECOVERY ON TRACK
- 5) REVENUE OPTIONS FOR MISSISSIPPI'S FISCAL CRISIS

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