

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Workforce Development Discussed During National Governors Association Committee Meeting Hosted by Bryan

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Staff Consortium **July 12, 2021**



Governor Albert Bryan

Government House announced Monday that U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Marty Walsh joined Community Renewal Co-Chairs Governor Albert Bryan and Missouri Governor Mike Parson on Thursday, July 8, at the NGA Virtual Summer Meeting.

According to the release, Mr. Bryan and Mr. Parson led the discussion on workforce development in their state and territory, and they were joined by Governors Dan McKee of Rhode Island, Jared Polis of Colorado and Tom Wolfe of Pennsylvania to discuss

innovative executive branch, congressional and state-level policy solutions.

Mr. Bryan has said that workforce development begins in Pre-Kindergarten, and this week the Bryan-Roach Administration announced registration opening for the Sugarapple Pre-Kindergarten program and hosted a ribbon-cutting for the new Charlotte Amalie High School Annex that will be used by ninth-grade students this school year, according to Gov't House.

Mr. Walsh said he is pushing Congress to make sure that job training dollars get into the infrastructure bill and plans to strengthen and expand JobCorps pathways into good jobs, the release stated.

"If you can't get into a trade or apprenticeship, Job Corps is a viable option," Mr. Walsh told the governors. He said the Biden administration will help states and territories build capacity for near-term innovation and longer-term strategy to prepare their workforces for a post Covid-19 economy.

"Every vulnerable community is being addressed. Secretary Walsh gets it," stated Governor Bryan. "Workforce Development is key and is the pathway out of poverty, as JobCorps is brought deeper into the fold."

Governors and the Departments of Labor, Commerce and Education plan to target dropouts; devote integrated and specific attention to community colleges; advance digital access and skill development; and enhance equity and job quality for all workers, according to the release.

As Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically reshaped large segments of the U.S. economy, governors are working to secure assistance for displaced workers and affected businesses, while building new frameworks and interventions to support a more equitable economic recovery, Gov't House said.

Gov't House said that across the states and territories, they are focused on Pre-Kindergarten all the way up to high school, free college tuition for residents in the Virgin Islands, and at few other colleges, alongside consideration for all the apprenticeships.

"Every student has a laptop and we've started Pre-Kindergarten in the Virgin Islands," Mr. Bryan told the NGA Committee.

According to the release, the Virgin Islands has established the V.I. Department of Labor as a State Registered Apprenticeship Agency (RAP) and held its first workforce summit focused on the development of apprenticeships in the Virgin Islands' in-demand industries and occupations. There are currently three RAPs sponsors covering six occupations, Gov't House said.

According to the administration, the territory is using Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds through the "Skills for Today" initiative to build capacity in disaster recovery-related jobs, which builds resiliency in local workforce by offering training and work-based learning opportunities that offer practical experience.

The Virgin Islands also has developed a holistic workforce plan that invests \$12 million across two years to create workforce development infrastructure, programs and services

that will increase access to opportunities for more V.I. residents and employer resources that support economic growth, Gov't House said.

The American Rescue Plan is significant for governors, especially, their rural and urban agendas, which goes hand-in-hand with President Biden's Build Back Better Agenda. High-quality care for every family, home care for aging parents, and training and coaching for employees are at the nucleus of their strategic plans, according to the release.