

February 3, 2011

Dear Senator:

On behalf of Goodwill Industries International (GII) and its network of 158 community-based Goodwill agencies, this year I urge you to strengthen the workforce system's capacity to help people with employment challenges to find jobs and advance in careers by 1) protecting funding for job training; and 2) reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act.

Last year, local Goodwill agencies across the United States and North America provided job training, employment services, and supportive services to nearly 2 million people, including more than 155,000 job placements. Goodwill is moving aggressively to grow its enterprise by opening more stores and attended donation centers in order to create jobs and generate more privately raised revenues to invest in people who are facing employment challenges in the communities that local Goodwill agencies serve.

Goodwill is proud of these achievements, but we cannot discount how federal investment in the workforce system supports Goodwill's efforts. Each year, the federal government invests nearly \$3 billion to help adults, youth, and dislocated workers to find jobs and access training that will help them grow in their careers. Goodwill® matches that federal investment roughly dollar for dollar, as it dedicates 83 percent of its \$3.7 billion in revenues raised through its retail, online sales commercial services and other social enterprises to give people the skills they need to reenter the workforce.

Goodwill understands that reducing the deficit is a serious issue that will require all to make sacrifices; however, Goodwill is concerned that reduced funding for job training, already stretched thin when the unemployment rate was nearly half that which it is today, would make it more difficult for local Goodwill agencies and their community partners to help people with employment barriers – including individuals with disabilities, older workers, people with a criminal background, and welfare recipients – who are struggling to find and keep jobs when the job market remains stubbornly tight.

We cannot forget the fact that nearly one out of every 10 people in communities across the country are in pain right now as they struggle everyday to find work at a time when the unemployment rate remains high. In addition, people are trying to maintain a certain financial level in order to support themselves and their families. Unless we help people succeed and fulfill their immediate employment needs, many will not benefit tomorrow when today's investments begin to pay off. Strategies that help people to earn while providing opportunities to learn are needed. Job training programs, including the Workforce Investment Act's adult, youth, and dislocated worker funding streams, work to immediately connect or reconnect people to the workforce.

Considering what's at stake, Goodwill urges Congress to do two things this year to help community-based organizations, like Goodwill, to do more to help people back to work. First, maintain the investment in the workforce system to help people train for jobs that local employers are seeking to fill with skilled workers. Continued investment in the workforce system should reduce people's reliance on public supports. In addition, some served by the workforce system will earn enough income to help the federal government raise new revenues needed in order to reduce the deficit while investing in our nation's future.

Second, Congress must reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act. It is tragic that the Workforce Investment Act has not been revised since it was enacted in 1998 – a time when unemployment was half that which it is today. The time to reauthorize it is long overdue and the 112th Congress should update the law this year so that it is better designed to take on the challenges we face today and to move our workforce in the direction that it needs to go tomorrow.

Goodwill thanks you for considering its concerns, and looks forward to working with you to help government meet the serious challenges our nation faces. Please feel free to contact me at (240) 333-5202 or Seth Turner, Senior Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy, at seth.turner@goodwill.org or (240) 333-5508.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Gibbons", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Gibbons
President and CEO