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## **NEW YORK CITY YOUNG ADULTS SEEKING WORK PAY HIGH PRICE FOR FLAWED STATE PROJECT**

### **New Research Report Shows New York State requires jobless youth to obtain training credential proven ineffective in getting them jobs and may violate the civil rights of black participants**

*“The National Work Readiness Credential is of zero value for young adults seeking work, employers needing entry-level workers, or providers trying to end the unemployment crisis among New York City youth.”* – Lou Miceli, Executive Director of JobsFirstNYC

(New York, NY—April 21, 2014) – A report released today by JobsFirstNYC discloses that the State of New York compels jobless young adults to compete for a worthless training credential, rather than provide them with the tools they need to qualify for decent-paying jobs. Research shows the **National Work Readiness Credential** (NWRC) is racially biased, irrelevant for jobs that young adults seek, and is not recognized by New York City employers. Thousands of young adults who are forced to prepare for the qualifying exam each year fail to obtain the credential, with black test takers failing at twice the rate of whites. The State’s costly promotion of the NWRC, despite its clear lack of benefit and potential civil rights violation, diverts resources away from programs proven to get young adults into the workforce.

The full report can be found [here](#), and an Executive Summary of the report is available [here](#).

More than 172,000 young adults ages 18 to 24 are out of school and out of work in New York City. The State of New York has made the NWRC the cornerstone of employment programs for them. Locally-based employment and training providers are now required to spend weeks preparing young adults for an exam purported to show that they are “work ready.” A two-year investigation by JobsFirstNYC has resulted in a report—*The National Work Readiness Credential: Who Pays the Price?*— that shows that the test for the NWRC does not measure the skills needed to perform the jobs sought by young adults and that no employer requires or even requests the credential.

“New York City young adults face an unemployment crisis and need to get useful training, education and support services, not a credential with zero value,” said **Lou Miceli, Executive Director of JobsFirstNYC**, a nonprofit focused on connecting young adults to the economic life of New York City. “New York State’s mandate on the NWRC makes no sense. The State should be supporting programs that equip young adults with the skills and credentials that employers seek. Focusing on the NWRC wastes scarce time and money that could be put into programs proven to work.”

New York State is aware of the deficiencies of the NWRC, the report shows. After conducting a multi-state field test, a national testing expert deemed the NWRC to be invalid for young adults and non-white populations – the very same populations for whom the NWRC is now mandated.

The vast majority of test takers, therefore, never attain the credential. Only 312 young adults in New York City passed the test in 2011, out of an estimated 12,000 who prepared for it. The hiring rate for the few individuals who obtain the credential is virtually identical to the hiring rate of those without it. “Forcing young adults to take a test they will likely fail, when they’re already confronting tremendous barriers in entering the workforce, is counterproductive and interferes with efforts to improve their skills and get a good job,” said Miceli.

“When working with challenged populations who are trying to achieve economic self-sufficiency, time is of the essence,” said **Robert Carmona, Co-Founder and former President and CEO of STRIVE International**. “There is very little time to put into activities that are not going to reap dividends for the young adults.” The JobsFirstNYC report shows that the NWRC takes this precious time away from much more valuable activities for young people. STRIVE International provides job training and job placement to thousands of New Yorkers each year. The vast majority of its clients are people of color, and 37% of its New York City clients are out-of-school, out-of-work young adults.

JobsFirstNYC began its investigation of the NWRC after organizations like STRIVE expressed frustration with the credential's cost and apparent lack of benefit. After research established that the test was invalid for young adults, was unrecognized by employers, and may violate the federal Civil Rights Act, JobsFirstNYC recommended that New York State cease mandating credential testing. The State refused, insisting that the test “gives employers what they want.” When JobsFirstNYC sought supporting data from the State, none was produced.

“As an employer, I find that the National Work Readiness Credential is not useful in helping find out if an applicant is qualified for a job at one of our stores,” said **Greg Hambric, Regional Recruiter at Modell’s Sporting Goods**. “We employ over 2,000 young people, and we have turned instead to our own internal hiring protocol that we know works for us.”

“Employment data shows that the NWRC was ineffective, and we informed the State that its promotion of the credential did not help young people qualify for jobs,” said **Margaret Stix, author of the report** and a principal at Lookout Hill Public Policy Associates. “The State needs to recognize that the NWRC is a futile and costly misadventure. With shrinking workforce development budgets and rising young adult unemployment, it is simply an expense that New York cannot afford.”

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*JobsFirstNYC is a neutral intermediary and a champion for the workforce needs of out-of-school, out-of-work young adults in New York City. Our mission is to improve the system for young adults by bringing together—effectively and efficiently—all available community, corporate, private and public resources to accelerate the connection of out-of-school, out-of-work young adults with the economic life of New York City.*