



## Helping Delawareans Win at the Game of Life

### Q&A with Secretary of Labor Cerron Cade

#### **What is your biggest challenge as you enter 2020?**

Our biggest challenge in 2020 will be the upskilling of workers in low wage and easily automated occupations. We must ensure that these workers have the credentials and in-demand skills to adapt to our rapidly changing economy.

#### **We are in an environment where we have record low unemployment. How does that change your strategy for Delaware?**

Low unemployment is always great. However, it is not without its challenges. As the unemployment rate falls what remains in the labor pool are workers with significant barriers to employment. These individuals represent some of the hardest to employ workers.

Much needed wrap around services like education programs, social services and transportation, are necessary to pair with traditional skill development programs. Legislatures and employers will also have to support barrier-eliminating policies related to criminal records, expungement and professional licensure.

This strategy can be more expensive, requires more time, case management and a re-evaluation of legacy hiring practices and norms at every level.

#### **Delaware, like many other states, has a large population of underemployed workers. Is there a plan to help boost this sector through workforce training programs?**

Yes. We work very closely with workers who are trying to upskill or change careers. However, we can always do more. We are currently working with private industries to address this population's specific needs. When it comes to workforce development, it is incredibly important to get commitment and participation from the private sector. In Delaware we have several major employers in the financial services sector, construction and food services that have stepped up to partner with us on these initiatives.

#### **Delaware Technical Community College, Zip Code Wilmington and others have great programs that provide very targeted job training with good job placement outcomes. How is the Department of Labor working to provide additional training without competing with existing programs?**

I think it's important to understand the Department of Labor's role. The Department of Labor does not facilitate our own skills training programs. We provide funding for workers to participate in the programs at Delaware Technical Community College (our largest training provider) and have

always been a partner with providers like ZipCode Wilmington, University of Delaware, Delaware State University, our Vo-Tech School Districts and others. We provide resources to training providers to support the emerging needs of workers and employers. We identify gaps in the training ecosystem and work with existing and start-up programs to fill those gaps. We serve as a force multiplier. We help providers build capacity and better address the needs of our economy. We also serve an important oversight role by ensuring that training providers are offering legitimate certifications and employment opportunities to protect trainees from fraud. There's no competition in what we do, only opportunity.

#### **Surrounding states seem to draw away much of Delaware's younger talent. As our workforce ages, there is a huge gap in a ready, qualified workforce to fill these positions as more experienced workers retire. How is Delaware positioning itself to deal with this problem? What can be done to help reverse this trend?**

Delaware must be a place that people want to work, live and play. This means that jobs need to provide great wages, communities have to provide the quality of life that workers expect, and we have to have a world renowned education system. We must grow talent locally and recruit talent regionally in order to satisfy the needs of our state's economy. Targeted investments in our workforce, infrastructure, commuter transportation and growing our colleges and universities go a long way toward achieving this goal.

#### **You have held many successful jobs in state government. How do you measure your personal success?**

I used to play on the offensive line at Delaware State University. The most unique thing about being an offensive lineman is that it's the only position in sports that does not collect personal statistics. As linemen, we didn't throw the ball, we didn't score touchdowns and we didn't get tackles. As offensive linemen our job was to create opportunities for other players to be successful, thus giving our team the best chance at victory. Therefore, we were hardwired to measure our individual success by the collective achievement of the team. I have taken that mentality into every position that I've ever held. If we're creating lanes of opportunity for Delawareans to win in the game of life, then I consider that a personal success. ■

If you're interested in workforce development opportunities, visit [www.dol.delaware.gov](http://www.dol.delaware.gov)