Workers are mobilizing and demanding more of work: higher wages, decent hours and benefits, and voice in the structure of their jobs. Our nation’s workforce development system could support the collective demands of workers but it does not, as it is mired in a pro-business approach and focused on solving the individual “deficits” of workers. It is time to put workers and their collective demands at the center of national workforce policy.

In the United States, we rely on our federal and state workforce development policies to connect people to jobs. But our policies, rooted in neoliberalism, assume that joblessness and poverty are primarily the fault of individuals who lack information, skills, or a sufficient work ethic. Rather than focus on strategies for expanding the quantity and quality of jobs while also broadening access to them and strengthening worker voice, our workforce development policies respond to the needs of local employers for workers, regardless of the quality of the job.

Not surprisingly, this employer-led, “demand-driven model” has privileged the needs of businesses with high turnover rates while largely ignoring the needs of workers for family-sustaining jobs. It has undermined worker agency and power while also reinforcing long-standing patterns of occupational segregation by race and gender that push women, and Black and Latino workers into low-wage and precarious jobs. A recent meta-analysis of evaluation reports revealed the failure of our current workforce development approach to improve the long-term economic well-being of jobseekers.

It is time for a new approach. The Good Jobs Collaborative is committed to building a new...
approach to workforce development that puts the needs of workers for quality jobs at the center of public policy. We have developed the following four principles to guide our policy development process:

**The GJC believes that a worker-centered workforce development system must...**

1. **Put workers first and build worker power.** Public resources and policies should actively be in service to workers first, always center worker interest and needs, and rectify structural inequities in the economy. The system should advance worker voice, power, organizing, and unionization.

2. **Raise the floor on all jobs for all workers.** All workers and their families should be able to thrive. A worker-centered workforce development system should engage in activities and direct resources that raise the quality of jobs for all workers, ensure that the full range of workers’ rights are protected, and raise standards across all occupations and industries.

3. **Combat the legacy, current conditions, and ongoing impact of structural racism and sexism within our labor market.** A worker-centered workforce development system should actively address occupational segregation and systemic and structural racism and sexism in the labor market. The system should advance targeted, race-conscious policies that confront systemic underinvestment in women, workers of color, and immigrants and redress current and past harms.

4. **Connect people to good jobs:** A worker-centered workforce development system builds pathways into good jobs for workers who are unemployed or underemployed. This happens through a combination of active labor market policies, high-quality training and career counseling, support services, and prioritizing job quality.

**About the Good Jobs Collaborative**

The Good Jobs Collaborative is a diverse collective of people and organizations dedicated to advancing a worker-centered workforce development system. Our goal is to build a new narrative to guide workforce development policy that is grounded in principles of economic justice, advances racial and gender equity, is organized around the needs of workers first, and builds opportunities for worker voice and power.

The Good Job Collaborative includes the Advancing Black Strategies Initiative, Aspen Institute’s Economic Opportunities Program, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Center on Education & Labor at New America, Healthcare Career Advancement Program (H-CAP), High Road Strategy Center at University of Wisconsin, Jobs to Move America, Jobs with Justice, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Milwaukee Area Service and Hospitality Workers Organization (MASH), and Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC) United, and the Service Employees International Union.