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**NEWS RELEASE  
REPORT: CHICAGO TEENS FACE BARREN JOB MARKET; YOUTHS TALK CONSEQUENCES  
*91% Of Chicago Black Male Teenagers Jobless In 2012-13***

**CHICAGO** – Former out-of-school students, who now attend Alternative Schools Network (ASN) high schools or community-based programs, appeared before a panel of state and local public officials today, fleshing out the cold, hard statistics from a new report on youth joblessness with their own real-life experiences on the impact of being unable to find jobs.

"Right now we are fighting an uphill battle," said Andrea L. Zopp, president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League. "With the support of the city and state, our organization has provided mentoring and employment opportunities that our young people so desperately need through our Summer Youth Employment and Greencorps programs. But we need the resources to expand these programs. If we hope to make sustainable progress we need to continue to invest in our youth and their future."

The new report, which provides a comparative analysis of youth unemployment between Chicago, Illinois and the United States, was released at a Chicago Urban League Youth Hearing: ***Youth Employment A Smart Investment***. Despite a growing national economic recovery, Chicago is one of the nation's leaders in teenage youth joblessness, with low-income Black and Hispanic teens continuing to fall significantly behind.

"When the economy crashed eight years ago, Chicago's teens were already in crisis," said Jack Wuest, executive director, Alternative Schools Network. "As we see from this report, this crisis has grown even worse. The number of low-income African American and Hispanic teens who are unable to find employment and are disengaged from both work and school is staggering. Investments in creating meaningful work for these youth will pay dividends immediately and for years to come. A failure to do so will have dire consequences for our city and our state."

The report, ***A Frayed Connection: Joblessness among Teens in Chicago***, conducted by Dr. Paul Harrington director of the Center for Labor Markets and Policy and an education professor at Drexel University, uses recent American Community Survey data and is part of an ongoing series commissioned by ASN.

"We found that Illinois in general and especially Chicago are lagging behind the rest of the nation in job creation," Harrington said at the hearing.

And teenagers lost more than everyone, partly to workers 55 and over, and especially those 65 and over, who are retiring and then taking entry-level jobs that formerly went to teens, he said. Joblessness was especially high among Black and Hispanic teens, with low-income male teens in these groups at the very bottom.

"In almost every way that we looked at the numbers, your state and your city has a clearly demonstrated need to invest in the young people who are your future," Harrington said. "The consequences of failing to do so are dire. Teens and young adults who are out of school and out of work, these disconnected youth, face adverse labor market consequences in their adult years, including higher incidence of unemployment, reduced earnings, and higher incidence of poverty. Among young males, being out of school and out of work is strongly linked to incarceration. Out-of-school and out-of-work young females have higher probability of being single mothers, being jobless, and being poor which have adverse impacts on the well-being of their children."

The hearing was sponsored by the Urban League, ASN, Westside Health Authority, Chicago Area Project, Black United Fund of Illinois and Youth Connection Charter School.

## **KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT**

### ***TEENS LAG BEHIND IN JOBS RECOVERY FOLLOWING THE GREAT RECESSION***

The recovery of jobs in the nation's labor market has done little to improve the job market connections of teens across the nation and in Chicago.

- **In the nation and in Illinois about 26 to 27 percent of teens were employed on average.**
- **In Chicago the employment rate fell to just half of the state and national average.**
- **Just 13 out of every 100 16-to 19-year old residents in the city working on average over the three year period.**
- **The chances of a significant increase in teen employment rates in Illinois or Chicago during 2014 are not strong. The state ranked 46th among all states in its pace of new job creation, posting a rate of new job gains that was two-thirds slower than the nation as a whole.**
- **The state's job market had added just 67 jobs during the current recovery for every 100 jobs lost during the recession, ranking the state 43rd among all 50 states in its ability overcome the losses that occurred during the Great Recession.**

### ***BLACK AND HISPANIC TEENS FARE WORST IN FINDING JOBS***

Black teens faced the bleakest employment prospects in the city of Chicago.

- **In 2012-13 Chicago Black teens' employment rate stood at 10.5 percent, while 21.2 percent of Hispanic teens in Chicago were employed and 30.3 percent of White teens.**
- **A startling 91 percent of teenaged Black males in Chicago were jobless in 2012-13.**
- **One-fifth of Hispanic teens in Chicago were employed in 2012-13 compared to one-fourth in the state and the nation.**
- **The employment rate among Chicago's Black male teens dropped to 11 percent in 2012-13 from 18 percent in 2006-07, compared to a drop from 17.8 percent to 11.4 percent in Illinois and from 23.5 percent to 16.9 percent in the nation as a whole.**

### ***INCOME LEVEL ALSO AFFECTS EMPLOYMENT RATES***

The chances of a teen working are related to the level of family income.

- **Just 11 percent of Chicago teens from the lowest household income group (less than \$20,000) were employed in 2012/2013 while the rate rose to 15.2 percent among teens in \$20,000-\$40,000 income group, to 19.4 percent among \$60,000-\$79,000 income group, and to nearly 30 percent among \$100,000-\$150,000 income group.**
- **In Illinois 15.7 percent of the lowest-income teens were employed in that period, compared to 19.2 percent nationwide.**
- **Only 10 percent of Black teens and 13 percent of Hispanic teens from low-income households in Illinois were employed in 2012/2013.**
- **In Chicago only 7.3 percent of Black teens in that lowest income group, 13.4 of Hispanic and 17.7 percent of Whites were employed.**

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-WORK YOUTH ARE DISCONNECTED**

Teens and young adults who are out of school and out of work (“disconnected youth”) face adverse labor market consequences in their adult years.

- **In 2013 18 percent of teens and young adults in the city of Chicago were disconnected – both out-of-school and out-of-work – which was 5 to 6 percentage points higher than Illinois and the U.S. average.**
- **The disconnection rate was 10 percent for those 16-19 and 22 percent for those 20-24.**
- **Among youth aged 16 to 24, the disconnection rate was highest among Blacks (28%) and Hispanics (16%) and lowest among non-Hispanic, Whites (9%).**

The panelists included Janice Collier on behalf of Gov. Bruce Rauner, Illinois State Senators Mattie Hunter, District 33; Emil Jones III, District 14; Napoleon Harris III, District 15; Heather Steans, District 7; and Donne Trotter, District 17; Illinois State Representatives Monique Davis, District 27; Will Davis, District 30; Marcus Evans Jr., District 33; La Shawn Ford, District 8; Elizabeth Hernandez, District 24; Thaddeus Jones, District 29; and Rita Mayfield District 60; Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Evelyn, Diaz on behalf of Mayor Rahm Emanuel; City of Chicago Aldermen Jason Ervin, Ward 28; Emma Mitts, Ward 37; Harry Osterman, Ward 48; and Latasha Thomas, Ward 17; Cook County Commissioner Robert Steele, and Karen Chavers on behalf of Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin.

### **ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK**

The Alternative Schools Network (ASN) is a not-for-profit organization in Chicago working to provide quality education with a specific emphasis on inner-city children, youth and adults. Since 1973, ASN has been supporting community based and community-run programs to develop and expand training and other educational services in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to supporting direct services, ASN has been a consistent and effective advocate for community-based services whereby the people involved are active participants in developing and running programs – not passive recipients of services. To shape policies and programs, ASN has built an impressive track record of operating successful education, employment and support service programs. For more information please visit [www.asnchicago.org](http://www.asnchicago.org).

### **ABOUT CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE**

Established in 1916, the Chicago Urban League is a civil rights organization that empowers and inspires individuals to reach and exceed their economic potential. The Chicago Urban League supports and advocates for economic, educational and social progress for African-Americans through our agenda focused exclusively on economic empowerment as the key driver for social change. For more information, visit [www.thechicagourbanleague.org](http://www.thechicagourbanleague.org).

To read the full report, please go to [www.asnchicago.org](http://www.asnchicago.org).

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