

A message from the Executive Director



I am honored and humbled to lead WDI as we continue to navigate our way out of the COVID-19 pandemic. I may have a new role, but my roots in fighting for workers' rights run deep. From my years working for the NY State labor movement, I have seen firsthand how labor standards can raise workers' pay, benefits, and safety on the job. Unions, through collective bargaining, help close gender and racial pay gaps. However, in low-wage sectors, women and communities of color have seen tremendous job loss during this pandemic, partly due to a lack of essential child care. WDI is committed to helping ensure that they are front and center in an equitable recovery.

Our primary goal is to help rebuild the economy by getting people back to work safely while investing in workers' access to skills that meet various industry demands. Workforce Development is not just a buzzword today. It is essential to creating an economic climate that levels the playing field for underserved populations. Companies must have social equity and workforce development plans attached to their proposals when requesting state and local assistance or winning contract bids. WDI has been a trusted partner with labor and those in the business community who understand that high road family-sustaining jobs with good pay and benefits are critical to bringing people out of poverty, back into the workforce, and into the middle class.

WDI is grounded in our worker-centered approach and will continue to form strategic partnerships to:

- Create a more diverse workforce in industries where women and people of color are underrepresented, and build a pipeline to high-quality jobs with on-the-job training.
- Grow an equitable cannabis industry that will include skills training and job readiness programs for disenfranchised communities.
- Build a greener economy with renewable energy supply chain opportunities for workers in construction, maintenance & operation, and manufacturing American-made components large & small.
- Enhance infrastructure projects that support apprenticeship programs to rebuild roads and bridges, rail and transit, and modernize the electrical grid.
- Advocate for human infrastructure needs and workforce supports like affordable and accessible child care and help improve wages for those who care for our most vulnerable.



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We will use this opportunity to build on our organizational accomplishments while working with allies on programs from the ground level. In addition, we will ensure accountability and transparency of the vital public funding we receive. Finally, our work will help address emerging workforce challenges, propose innovative solutions, and support employers that place workers as full partners to improve economic productivity in New York State.

In closing, I would also like to recognize the tremendous effort put forth by our staff and Board. Their collective skills and passion are unmatched, and I appreciate their dedication to our work and look forward to leading the organization to a bright future alongside them.

In partnership,

Amy Desjardins