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## Governor Carcieri, House & Senate Leadership Release Report Outlining Recommendations of CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission

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Governor Donald L. Carcieri, Speaker Gordon D. Fox, Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (EDC), and the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission gathered at the CCRI Knight Campus in Warwick today to release the CCRI Commission's report *Community College of Rhode Island: Building a 21st Century Workforce*. The report outlines the Commission's recommendations for strengthening CCRI's position as a critical resource to educate workers for high-wage jobs in the state's 21st century knowledge economy.

The CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission was approved by Governor Carcieri and the General Assembly in 2008. The Commission is chaired by Armeather Gibbs, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the United Way of Rhode Island, and is comprised of both public and private representatives.

With financial support from The Rhode Island Foundation, the United Way of Rhode Island, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Commission partnered with the Workforce Strategy Center to conduct research on best practices of community colleges, interview a wide variety of stakeholders, and create the final report. The Workforce Strategy Center, which also provided in-kind support for the study, is a New York City-based non-profit with extensive experience working with education, workforce development and economic development agencies to craft strategies to facilitate student and worker success while promoting the growth of regional economies.

"CCRI provides a pathway to opportunity for tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders who seek to further their education or develop job-related skills, and it is a critical asset to businesses in need of trained, educated workers with a variety of skill sets," said Governor Carcieri. "As our economy and workforce needs have evolved, however, it has been necessary to reexamine the role CCRI plays within the workforce development system and align resources more strategically. This ongoing process will help position our state and its citizens to better compete in the 21st century economy, and ensure that student skill levels meet employer needs as we move forward. The findings contained in the report will guide CCRI toward a more industry-focused role in the workforce development system, while enhancing career pathways for students."

"CCRI represents the focal point of our state's ability to move forward economically. Through its workforce preparation efforts, CCRI provides Rhode Island's businesses with the human capital that makes companies grow. It acts as the gateway for a new generation to access higher education and contribute to our knowledge-based economy. By strategically aligning CCRI's actions with the state's goals and resources, all Rhode Islanders benefit," said Speaker Gordon D. Fox.

President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed said, "CCRI plays a critical role in preparing Rhode Islanders for their first jobs and retraining individuals for new jobs as skill requirements evolve. Ensuring that Rhode Islanders have the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century is one of the most important steps we can take to grow jobs and improve the economy. The strategic alignment of CCRI with Rhode Island employers will enable the creation of a statewide career pathways system driven by industry needs."

The Commission found that in addition to being the largest supplier of healthcare workers in Rhode Island, CCRI is well-positioned to address the demand for workers in the financial, accounting, information technology, engineering and technology fields, as well as supervisory

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positions across industries. To meet the demand, however, CCRI must increase enrollments in new areas of study, graduate more students with certificates and degrees in areas of industry demand, offer more opportunities for students to gain work experience, and address the need for entry-level workers with "soft skills" such as communicating professionally and responding to customer service needs.

The report outlined four recommendations based on the best practices of community colleges across the nation that have become workforce development drivers:

§ Create a statewide career pathways system that is driven by industry needs.

§ Strengthen CCRI's capacity to raise the knowledge and skill levels in our state's population.

§ Encourage a culture of innovation and responsiveness at CCRI to meet the workforce development needs of students and business.

§ Leverage resources and partnerships including the Governor's Workforce Board throughout the state to accomplish the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission concluded that the state should tap the expertise of education, workforce development, and economic development partners to create an organizing structure that would support an industry-focused, strategic approach to the development of a statewide career pathways system, while instituting performance measures that are transparent to the public. As a next step, Acting Commissioner of Higher Education and CCRI President Ray M. DiPasquale and his staff at the community college will work with the Governor's Workforce Board and other partners to develop an action plan for implementing the report's recommendations.

Senate Majority Leader Daniel Connors said, "The actions recommended by the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission will enable CCRI to become a workforce development engine which better prepares Rhode Islanders to fill 21st century jobs, from information technologies to green technologies. These actions will enable companies to more readily find the skilled workers they require to create jobs and build their companies here in Rhode Island."

"We are very pleased to present a comprehensive report that acknowledges lots of good work going on across the state along with specific recommendations to strengthen CCRI as a workforce development institution," said Commission Chair Armeather Gibbs. "We believe the recommendations suggested are critical to moving CCRI in a direction that will enable it to build on and strengthen its current workforce strategies. This work is all about recognizing initiatives that are already in place and 'connecting the dots' between education, workforce development, job creation, economic development and the overall opportunities for greater financial stability for citizens, employers and the state as a whole."

"On behalf of the Community College of Rhode Island, I want to thank Governor Carcieri, Speaker Fox, Senate President Paiva Weed and especially the members of the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission for their diligent effort over several months in discussing the issues that affect CCRI and strategizing how best to support the work of the Community College going forward," said CCRI President Ray M. DiPasquale. "We appreciate the recognition of CCRI's significant role in the development of a workforce development solution for our state. I want everyone to know we embrace that role and we look forward to working together with our colleagues in government and in business and industry to move Rhode Island forward toward economic recovery and revitalization."

"Workforce development is a key factor in growing any economy and we at the RIEDC are thrilled to have been the catalyst in developing and guiding the CCRI Commission," said Keith Stokes, Executive Director of the RIEDC. "Developing a qualified and well-trained workforce is imperative for the success of Rhode Island's economy. Companies looking to grow and relocate to Rhode Island need to know they have the human resources to ensure success."

The members of the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission include:

§ Armeather Gibbs, Chair; Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, United Way of Rhode Island

§ Hon. Joseph S. Almeida, Deputy Majority Leader, Rhode Island House of Representatives

§ Hon. Daniel Connors, Majority Leader, Rhode Island Senate

§ Eileen Farley, former President of Bristol Community College

§ Hon. Gordon D. Fox, Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives

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§ Paul Harrington, Associate Director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University

§ William C. McGowan, Business Manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2323 and Vice Chair of the Governor's Workforce Board

§ Sandra Powell, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training

§ J. Michael Saul, Deputy Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation

§ Robert Shea, Vice President of Business Affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island

§ Diane M. St. Laurent, Professor of Management at the URI College of Business Administration; Entrepreneur and Business Owner

§ Leslie Taito, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Manufacturing Extension Services

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