

Ray Allen: Foxconn investment creates transformational workforce opportunities for all Wisconsinites

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With 13,000 new jobs and a capital investment of \$10 billion, Foxconn is a tremendous win for Wisconsin's economy and workforce. As Wisconsin's incentive package advances through the Legislature and we all prepare for this once-in-a-generation opportunity, I hear the same question time and again: Where will we find the workers?

Thankfully, Governor Walker has made workforce development a top priority and, as his Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), I am proud of the efforts I and my Cabinet colleagues have made in workforce readiness to provide anyone who is able to work with the opportunities to develop skills for good-paying jobs.

For populations across Wisconsin that are unemployed, underemployed, or have not previously been part of the workforce, Foxconn provides transformational opportunity. That includes opportunity for those in the minority community who are facing barriers, particularly in the Milwaukee area where unemployment among working-age black men has been a significant challenge for more than a generation.

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To this end, DWD is building inroads through multiple strategies:

DWD has met and continues to work in collaboration with workforce partners in Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha to map out a unified strategy to connect

unemployed and underemployed workers with training for new opportunities made possible by Foxconn and its suppliers.

We are coordinating job training and recruitment activities with the Departments of Children and Families and Health Services to focus on low-income participants in workforce programs such as FoodShare Employment and Training and Wisconsin Works (W-2).

We are preparing to establish educational sessions with local workforce and community groups such as local Urban Leagues and various minority chambers of commerce to provide supplier and hire requirement information for possible Foxconn employment or contracting opportunities.

We will continue to invest in public education initiatives such as Academic and Career Plans and Youth Apprenticeships so students in all school districts, including those in urban areas, explore good-paying career opportunities and develop in-demand skills.

These developments complement the Walker Administration's ongoing workforce development efforts, which are further supported through the Governor's Minority Task Force on Unemployment co-chaired by Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and state Representative Jason Fields. The task force has worked diligently to examine and pursue potential solutions to challenges such as transportation and other barriers so all working families can benefit from Foxconn's transformational investment in our state.

In Wisconsin, we are connecting job seekers in Milwaukee and other communities to family-supporting jobs through government innovation and collaboration with the private sector, community-based organizations and other groups. We've built a strong foundation, and Foxconn provides tremendous opportunities to do even more so that all workers, including those in the minority community, can prepare for and access good-paying jobs.

At DWD, we will reach out to and assist any worker, every step of the way, just as we've always done.

— *Allen is secretary of the Department of Workforce Development.*