Advancing Employment Equity in Rural North Carolina

North Carolina’s future competitiveness depends on the participation and inclusion of all residents, especially rural residents who are locked out of the economy. Employment equity—when everyone who wants to work has a good job that pays family-supporting wages—is the path forward. By addressing lingering societal barriers to full economic inclusion and connecting more rural North Carolinians to career pathways, we can reduce economic insecurity, meet employers’ needs for talent, and bolster economic growth, building a more prosperous North Carolina for all.

Nearly 661,000 working-age adults in rural North Carolina are economically insecure... 

- 48% are stuck in low-wage jobs
- 10% are looking for work
- 42% are out of the labor force

“The only job options are either fast food or a grocery store. This town is becoming an empty lot. Factories and good jobs are disappearing.”

- TIMOTHY, EDEN FOCUS GROUP

North Carolina would be stronger with employment equity. With full employment for all, rural North Carolina could have seen...

$5.2 billion in additional economic activity (GDP)

This translates to 60 percent of what the state spent on public education in 2016.

145,951 more people connected to work

55,583 fewer people in poverty

$1.1 billion in additional tax revenue

...growth is not reaching everyone. Of these economically insecure adults,
What’s holding rural North Carolina back?

• limited childcare and transportation options
• widespread use of contingent workers
• criminal background checks

“You have to go through a temp service. I managed to find a temp job driving forklifts making $7.95 an hour doing the same job as guys making $19.95 an hour. The same job for way less money.”

- REGINA, LUMBERTON FOCUS GROUP

The way forward: Employment equity.

1) Protect temporary workers by limiting the amount of time a worker can be considered temporary before being required to hire them directly.
2) Expand access to quality and affordable child care through increased funding for the NC Child Care Subsidy program.
3) Scale up workforce development efforts that connect struggling workers to quality jobs and career pathways.

Data analysis from the National Equity Atlas, a partnership between PolicyLink and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE). For details on our methodology, visit http://plcy lk.org/2ApazHr.

Note: Rural North Carolina is defined as all parts of the state that do not fall within the nine largest metro areas of Asheville, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Hickory, Raleigh, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem.

For the full report:
www.nationalequityatlas.org/reports/reports-analyses
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