NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
Labor & Workforce Development
NEWS RELEASE

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Aaron R. Fichtner, Ph.D., Sworn In as Commissioner of the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

TRENTON, June 5, 2017 – Today Governor Chris Christie presided over the swearing-in of Aaron R. Fichtner, Ph.D., who will serve as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

"It is humbling to accept Governor Christie's nomination and to have the great opportunity to serve New Jersey's workforce in this role," said Commissioner Fichtner. "I look forward to continuing the strong partnerships and initiatives that will make sure that New Jersey has the most skilled, productive and innovative workforce in the country."

On May 25, 2017, the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously voted to confirm Fichtner in the title, which was made official later in the afternoon when the full Senate voted 38-0 to confirm his nomination. In a show of bipartisan support, Senator Ronald Rice (D-28th District) spoke on Fichtner's behalf. "I know for a fact that Aaron gets it," said Senator Rice. He went on to say, "He gets it. He understands that our strength in New Jersey, our strength with growing businesses, is in the area of diversity."

Dr. Fichtner was appointed Acting Commissioner by Governor Christie on September 23, 2016 after serving as Deputy Commissioner, where he directly oversaw the department's program areas including Workforce Operations and Business Services, Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity, Research and Information, Income Security, and Labor Standards and Safety Enforcement. In that role, Fichtner led the department's efforts to develop a strategic vision and direction for workforce and talent development in New Jersey and to implement all four titles of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. He focused the department's workforce investments on the needs of employers in the state's key industries.

Additionally, he led the development of seven industry-focused Talent Networks responsible for building high-quality, employer-driven partnerships across the state. Under Fichtner's leadership, the department has expanded services to jobseekers through partnerships with employers, community colleges, libraries, and community-based organizations and strengthened connections between unemployment insurance and reemployment services. He also worked to modernize the state's unemployment insurance program through technology enhancements and improved processes. He has strengthened the use of data throughout the department by developing new performance metrics, implementing a workforce longitudinal data system, and developing industry-focused labor market information. Prior to assuming the role as Deputy Commissioner in January 2012, Dr. Fichtner served as the department's Assistant Commissioner for Labor Planning and Analysis.

Commissioner Fichtner is among those leading the '65 by 25: Many Paths, One Future' initiative, working to help all New Jerseyans find pathways to employment through training aligned to the

needs of employers. The goal is to have 65 percent of the workforce equipped with a college degree or industry-valued credential by 2025. Currently, 52 percent of the workforce meets that criteria.

Before joining the department in 2010, Dr. Fichtner was the Director of Research and Evaluation at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. In that role, he conducted extensive research on the workforce and skill needs of key industries, implemented a variety of workforce and education initiatives, and conducted evaluations of education and training programs. He has also worked in the field of economic development in Jersey City and Atlanta.

Fichtner currently serves as Chair of the National Association of State Liaisons for Workforce Development Partnerships, the workforce development committee of the National Governors Association. He previously served as chairman of the Labor Market Information Committee of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, where he currently serves as a board member. In March 2016, Fichtner was appointed to the U.S. Department of Labor's Workforce Information Advisory Council which is advising the Secretary of Labor and the Commissioner of the Bureau of the Labor Statistics on the use of workforce and labor market information.

Fichtner earned a Ph.D. in Planning and Public Policy from Rutgers University, a Master's degree in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and a B.A. in History from Vassar College.

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