State

from page 1

funding for SDWP to increase job training in two pathways: the public sector and behavioral health and associated healthcare careers.

It is the largest funding Maienschein has been able to procure during his 10 years in the Assembly.

According to SDWP, the public sector is the largest employer in San Diego County and has the lowest turnover rate.

The sector employs more than 7% of all jobs in San Diego County and the industry has added nearly 8,000 jobs since 2010. More than 157,000 people are currently employed by the local healthcare sector, a field largely considered recession-proof due to demand for services.

SDWP reports that San Diego County is facing a significant behavioral health worker shortage. It estimates that 17,000 behavioral health professionals were employed in 11 key occupations in both the healthcare and public sectors. Meanwhile, the San Diego region is struggling to fill job openings for occupations in these in-demand fields.

Maienschein said that the 2022-23 state budget provided significant investments to a variety programs, including providing direct relief to Californians and investing in the state’s education, housing and healthcare systems.

“Brian really made this happen,” Callstrom said. “We weren’t trying to push for anything but he’s advocating on our behalf for a long time, looking to see how he can make more impact. This funding will allow us to support literally thousands of people to get the training necessary to get highly in-demand and well compensated careers. This will impact the entire community, a ripple effect that will affect the entire region, make our community better and give us more economic mobility. It’s a big win.”

Answering a Known Need

The need for behavioral health professionals with “lived” experience and diversity in language-speaking skills is also growing rapidly. Regional statistics shared by local leaders say that many of the highest-paying jobs have historically denied opportunity to women and people of color.

SDWP reports that Hispanic, Black, Native American and multiracial workers are disproportionately employed in the sector’s lowest-paying occupations.

The state funding helps answer a known need, that those seeking service from the public sector and healthcare industries feel more comfortable and better understood when they work with people from varied backgrounds and cultures.

“It is important that women and people of color have the same access to high-quality jobs and sustainable wages that will create a more diverse and equitable workforce that reflects the diversity of our region,” said Peter Callstrom, CEO of SDWP. “Assembly-member Maienschein’s visionary investment will allow us to break down barriers and ensure better opportunities for job seekers to succeed.”

Maienschein said the $10 million will help ensure that “our workplaces are representative of San Diego County’s diverse population” and noted that SDWP provides services to a diverse group of participants, “88% of whom are women and people of color.”

The money will help fund the establishment of a SDWP peer support specialist training program and provide pathways to jobs in emergency medical technician, paramedic and firefighter occupations. The programs will recruit, train and place individuals in pre-apprenticeships and certificate trainings.

Priority Occupations

The San Diego Workforce Partnership identified public sector careers in emergency medical services (EMT and paramedics) and firefighting as priority occupations, mostly because of the growth, demand and job quality they provide.

Local EMS providers and fire departments are focused on diversity and inclusion within their recruitment efforts across the region, while meeting the growing need to address talent shortages created by the pandemic and increasing retirements.

SDWP’s support specialist training program will provide training to support individuals who struggle with mental health, psychological trauma and/or substance abuse. The program will include eight to 10 weeks of full-time, subsidized peer support certification training conducted by an approved California Mental Health Services Authority training provider.

Job placements within the region’s firefighting departments and private sector emergency response companies will provide opportunities for career advancement, and San Diego Workforce Partnership leaders say will help address the lack of diversity and wage disparities in the public sector and healthcare fields.

According to an August 2022 report by SDWP, women and people of color are underrepresented in high-wage job opportunities in both the healthcare and public sectors. Meanwhile, the San Diego region is struggling to fill job openings for occupations in these in-demand fields.