

Preface

The Report on the Youth Labor Force was revised in November 2000.

I remember my first job—I worked as a summer camp counselor and taught young campers how to tap dance. It was a lot of fun. I worked most summers in my teen years and through college. I still use what I learned from those jobs every day as Secretary of Labor. I truly value those experiences and I'm an avid supporter of jobs for young workers.

I know that parents also understand how important early work experiences are. They know intuitively what this report suggests—that teenagers who deliver newspapers, bag groceries, or serve hamburgers in their after-school jobs are often more likely to go to college and have better lifelong careers. And make more money, too.

Employers, parents, schools, and government must continue to support positive work experiences for our youngest workers—but with two critical caveats: they must be safe

work experiences and work should never interfere with school.

We must be especially diligent in ensuring that our most vulnerable young workers, the children of migrant farm workers, are protected through strict enforcement of child labor laws in the fields. And they must be given every opportunity to get a good education.

I welcome this report. It provides the information we need to make wise policy decisions. Protecting our youngest workers is vital to our national interest. They should have the opportunity to experience the rewards and dignity of work without jeopardizing their education, their health, or their lives.

ALEXIS M. HERMAN, Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor