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Mayor's message: Good news in difficult times

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This is a challenging time for workers, families, business and homeowners. Sometimes, in the middle of this struggle we miss the really good news happening around us.

Last month, I had the pleasure and privilege of joining elected and business leaders at a news conference at the Struever Brothers worksite, known as the ALCO (American Locomotive Works) property off Valley St. We were announcing the relocation of the corporate headquarters of this country's largest organic food supplier -United Natural Foods Inc. (UNFI,) into a site that is rapidly growing with public and private sector activity.

The move by United Natural Foods means 150 very well-paying jobs will be coming to Providence - jobs that will approach an average of \$65,000. Plans are to continue to grow those jobs, so more area residents can be hired.

The impact of that announcement can't be overstated: those jobs mean real income to residents, improving their lives and their families' lives, and improving the quality of life of the neighborhoods in which they live. Those jobs also mean more spending in local restaurants and shops, theaters, dry cleansers, on goods and services within our immediate area - improving the welfare of merchants and workers alike.

This company's move to Providence also means increased local revenues - easing the burden on taxpayers - and increased state taxes through sales, inventory and income taxes, benefiting each of us, again.

More than that, though, United Natural Foods' move to Providence sends a clear and strong message to business leaders everywhere that despite our challenging times, Providence is a great place to live, work and run a business. We are ready and able to help.

The ALCO site is similar to other wonderful properties we have to offer in Providence, to start or grow a company. We have a strong, working partnership with our area brokers and Realtors, too, who are more than willing to share leads about available inventory - even when it isn't their own.

Couple that with our job training and workforce development, our tax policy initiatives and the many loans and instruments the city and state has to offer: Providence is truly the right place to consider.

Not lost on us is the great ingenuity and work ethic of those who are building these companies - here and elsewhere. In our community, we are fast earning a national and international buzz for our city - Providence/ The Creative Capital - because of the skills, creativity and knowledge our workers and business leaders have to offer.

I applaud those men and women who have taken the risk to pursue their dream - they are giving to our nation in more ways than can be appropriately measured. When you have the chance, I ask you to thank them - better still, show them your support with your patronage...there's nothing small about small business or their value to our city.

David Cicilline is the mayor of Providence.

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