

PA WDB Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday February 9th, 2022

10:30AM to 2:00PM

Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members:

- Chair Jeff Brown
- Idayat Adewunmi
- Shannon Austin
- Tim Bean
- Secretary Jennifer Berrier
- Richard Bloomingdale
- Julene Champion
- Representative Morgan Cephas
- Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger
- Jessica Eberley
- Patrick Eiding
- Chekemba Fulmore-Townsend
- Brian Funkhouser
- Justin Genzlinger
- Nick Gilson
- Commissioner Robert J. Harvie, Jr.
- Brad Hollabaugh
- Sarah Hollister
- Secretary Allison Jones
- Marguerite Kline
- Andrea McArthur
- Representative Ryan Mackenzie
- Bob McAuliffe
- Henry Nicholas
- Jodi Pace
- Commissioner Michael Pipe
- Tom Redden
- Secretary Russell Redding
- Gregg Riefenstahl
- Frank Sirianni
- John "Ski" Sygielski
- Laura Wand
- Matt Yarnell
- Deputy Secretary Tara Williams for Governor Tom Wolf
- Eric Kratz for Senator Camera Bartolotta
- Gwen Ross for Secretary Dennis Davin
- Amy Schwenk for Acting Secretary George Little
- Deputy Secretary Tanya Garcia for Secretary Noe Ortega
- Tyler Sciaudone for Representative Melissa Schusterman
- Hoa Pham for Acting Secretary Meg Snead
- David Miles for Secretary Robert Torres

Presenters:

- Deputy Secretary Tara Williams, Governor's Office
- Secretary Jennifer Berrier, PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Director Dan Kuba, PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Executive Director Shannon Austin, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Hoa Pham, PA Department of Human Services
- Dave Miles, PA Department of Aging
- Gwen Ross, PA Department of Community and Economic Development
- Amy Schwenk, PA Department of Corrections
- Secretary Russell Redding, PA Department of Agriculture
- Julie Kane, PA Department of Education
- Deputy Secretary Tanya Garcia, PA Department of Education
- Julie Kane, PA Department of Education
- John "Ski" Sygielski, Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee
- Rick Bloomingdale, Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee
- Sarah Hollister, One-Stop Service Delivery System Committee

- Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Youth Committee
- Matt Yarnell, Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee
- Jeffrey Abramowitz, Reentry Ad Hoc Committee
- Brian Funkhouser, Continuous Improvement Committee
- Director Matt Flinner, PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Executive Director James Martini, PA Workforce Development Board

Staff: Executive Director James Martini, Deputy Director Tracey Turner, Shuana Davis, Mary Hoskins, Michelle Lengel

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Brown began the meeting.

Chair's Updates

Chair Brown sought a motion to approve the minutes from the November 9th meeting.

MOTION: Henry Nicholas made the motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brown then introduced a new board member, Justin Genzlinger from Settlers Hospitality. Mr. Genzlinger remarked that his business is located in the Pocono Mountains in Northeast PA.

Governor's Office Updates

Deputy Secretary Tara Williams then began her report. She began by running through some of the key highlights in the Governor's budget that are relevant to the important work that the PA WDB does. The 22/23 budget has a focus on education workforce and economic development initiatives as well as criminal justice reform and supporting vulnerable populations. For education, the budget built on historic investments over the governor's administration focused on ensuring equitable access to opportunities. Starting from early childhood education where many outcomes begin, there is a \$70 million increase for pre-K and Headstart supplemental assistance program to increase access for a workforce in this program. There is a \$1.75 billion investment comprised of three main buckets. \$1.25 billion in basic education funding, that will go through the fair funding formula. \$200 million for special education funding, and \$300 million for the Level Up initiative which started last year and focuses on the 100 most underfunded districts in the state. The theme of increases and distribution mechanisms to address funding inequities in the K-12 system is evident. In the post-secondary space, investment to continue to support the governor's postsecondary attaining goals in Pennsylvania. The PAsmart initiative continues to be funded to support STEM and computer science as well as partnership programs and industry partnerships. The Nellie Bly tuition program is a \$20 million direct student investment to provide financial assistance to full-time students either at one of the state's universities or community college. It includes a focus on students pursuing programs in Pennsylvania's high needs sector, particularly those who have shortages related to the pandemic such as healthcare, education, and public service. In addition to education, the governor continues to call for initiatives that collectively impact the workforce system. This includes raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour beginning in July with a pathway to \$15 an hour by 2028. 30 states have a higher minimum wage than we do including all of PA's neighbors. This increase would impact an estimated 1.5 million people who would get a boost in pay and it also helps to keep Pennsylvania a competitive state to work in. Along those lines and separate from the budget, the Governor designed an executive order last month to raise the wages of Commonwealth workers under his jurisdiction to \$15 an hour which became effective January 31. On the business side, the budget proposes to reduce the corporate net

income tax rate from 9.99% with the desire to get to 4.99%. This would help improve the competitiveness of the state economy by lowering the tax rate and expanding the tax space to level the playing field for all businesses. The budget provides for an increase for industrial resource centers for manufacturing. There is also an increase in the PREP network as well as programs that provide for training and other supports for businesses. Also, they are very excited that there is a \$3.2 million investment to develop a robust statewide longitudinal data system. That is something that came out of the Workforce Command Center and the goal is to help the state better coordinate data through early education and employment to better understand outcomes and inform data-driven policy and program decisions. That proposal was actually out prior to the budget address. There are components that touch on workforce with a specific focus on supporting the healthcare sector as well as support for small businesses. There is also the Pennsylvania Opportunity Program to provide relief to workers and families from the high cost of childcare as well as supporting to a degree of Prudential as a part of pandemic recovery. Lastly, they are continuing to prepare for funds in the infrastructure investment and jobs act. It's \$6.2 billion over six years included across five agencies. They are still waiting on guidance for much of it, but there will be a workforce component to some of the funds coming in.

Chair Brown asked when the budget would begin to be talked about. Deputy Secretary Williams said they were going to start the process with the legislature and would be discussing it over the next several months. Chair Brown said that by the next PA WDB meeting, they should hear where the budget stands. Deputy Secretary Williams then added that Pennsylvania was a recipient of the National Governors Association grant to engage in a planning process to advance digital skill attainment. They have several team meetings and are outlining a high-level vision statement of essentially assuring all Pennsylvanians have the confidence to engage in life, learning, and work. They are working on more specific objectives and are obtaining data for source mapping. They know that technology is integral to Pennsylvanians' lives and without those skills, students and adults are going to be left out of educational workforce opportunities. They are seeking employer input to further understand what needs they are seeing that that space and if their objectives are hitting the market perspective. That will be coordinated through the PA WDB One-Stop committee. Chair Brown said that if someone wants to volunteer to talk to James.

Agency Report- Department of Labor and Industry

Secretary Berrier then began her report. She remarked that the unemployment rate for Pennsylvania in December was 5.4%. The weekly new claims that they are receiving is pretty much on par with what they were receiving prior to the pandemic two years ago. They are beginning to enter year three of the global pandemic and they are still continuing to experience this new world and its challenges and react appropriately. It is a very busy season for them as construction workers were filing for unemployment compensation benefits. It is the first time they are interacting with the new system. They were experiencing an uptick with their customer service and longer than usual wait times. As the Board knows, they went live with the new system in June 2021, so they are not yet through the first year and the growing pains, but they are happy to see the progress that they have made. They have a system that is interactive and very helpful for all Pennsylvanians including workers and employers alike. She noted about the L&I Director of Transformation would be talking about a very exciting project rolling out this summer, which is a digital intake form. Another thing going on with the Department was that on March 1st, they would be issuing a misclassification task force report. It was to study the effects of misclassification which was essentially workers begin categorized as independent contractors when in fact they do not meet the definition. She noted that the report is very robust with good data on the impact of that issue on Pennsylvania, its economy, and the workers. The report also has recommendations that will hopefully

help solve the problem and provide a level playing field for all Pennsylvania employers and provide greater protections for its workers.

Director Kuba then gave the workforce specific report. The clean energy grant within the Board packet is a new activity that the Department is working on. The idea and the plan is to invest \$2.5 million within the local workforce development systems to explore and identify clean energy opportunities throughout the Commonwealth. Also, over the last year and a half, they talked quite a bit about the Governor's investment around digital resources. That is not only from the Department of Labor and Industry but other departments as well. Knowing and understanding that PA citizens have some areas of difficulty navigating online systems and receiving services that they need to handle everyday life but also move forward and make changes. Mr. Kuba then talked about the digital literacy grants. The Department had also talked quite a bit over the last two years around providing additional resources to dislocated workers. The Governor's mission vision is supporting all of the unemployed led the Department down the path of providing additional training and education services to people. The Lancaster Workforce Development Board had done a presentation about a product called Metrix Learning. The Department went into a very detailed procurement process, with multiple different vendors and launched its Skill Up PA initiative. With that program they are providing a catalog of about 5000 online training programs with quite a few credentials that are available after completing this program. They are working with local boards and creating local portals that require participants for additional collaboration. Ryan Hyde did a presentation at the last board meeting about it. The program is continuously growing. They are currently working and looking at doing an outreach effort of 30,000 mailers that will go out to unemployed people. Also, in the Board briefing book was an update on the Veterans Employment Program grant. They state wanted to provide additional service to veterans who need support with career opportunities. They came up with an announcement that was put out and they are proud to say they will have four awardees receiving funding very shortly.

Mr. Kuba then brought up the TAA video production and how it was a huge advance for the Commonwealth. Every day, there are companies affected by foreign trade and the affects on employers. PA spent a year and a half exploring what is happening and going retroactive to all the Pennsylvanians that would be eligible for trade services because there are quite a few different laws that surround it. They were able to put together a digital series that explains the benefits and the results and the next steps of the trade program. Mr. Kuba talked about how they were able to get additional staff to support the program. He noted that Tara Loew at the Apprenticeship and Training Office was doing great work in working with traditional and nontraditional apprenticeships. He then talked about the ambassador network. It is a part of the overall PAsmart grant which will help the Commonwealth educate and get more people to understand the options that are available.

Chair Brown then asked for an update on the Continuous Improvement Committee assessing the software. Mr. Martini clarified that he was asking about software for the PA CareerLink®. The Board would be getting a presentation later on in the meeting from Matt Flinner who is the Director of the L&I Office of Transformation, and he would be talking about how they are going to standardize the intake process for individuals coming into the PA CareerLink®. Chair Brown asked if the Continuous Improvement Committee had a chance to see it. Mr. Martini said they had as they had gotten a few presentations about it.

Mr. Kuba then also added that Secretary Berrier put a place for the workforce development deputate to update the overall visual and presentation of material in the Commonwealth for the CWDS system.

Agency Report- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Executive Director Shannon Austin then provided the report for OVR. She remarked that in the last quarter, OVR business service outreach division staff had been working with several offices and were placing several referrals to various employers. In the last quarter alone, they worked with over 1,000 employers. Of those, 10 really raised through to the top of where their referrals have been and were placing people into employment. They include Walmart, Giant Eagle, Giant, as well as several other essential jobs in the Commonwealth. She then continued and said that last year, OVR had entered into an MOU with the Department of Education which was fully executed in March 2021. With that, they are entering into their second MOU with the Department of Education, and they were going to be rolling out transition employment and agency mentors, or team navigators throughout the Commonwealth. They will be placed in all of the intermediate units. There will be a total of 31 altogether. Two of the 31 are going to be geared towards working with individuals that are Spanish speaking. They will have caseloads that they work with but the basic thing with the navigator is to shepherd the MOU. They do not want to have a document that is just word alone, they want to be intentional in how they are preventing and collaborating and working with students who are 14 to 21 years of age as they transition out of school. The navigators are going to be responsible and collaborating with teachers, school districts, OVR staff, consultants at the national level, and community partners to make sure that the students are having services offered. Their hope is as the shepherds, the MOU will make sure that young people are not falling through the cracks and that they are there for tech support. Another thing they are rolling out for young people from 16 to 21 years of age is the youth ambassador position. It is going to be a paid work-based learning experience with them going through training and mentoring and will be housed in the intermediate units and parent youth leadership networks. They are allowing for a certain amount of students to be placed in office settings where they are learning various jobs, classifications, and duties. There will have 100+ students with this initiative as they roll it out throughout the state. She then remarked on some priorities of the HGAC (Hiram G. Andrews Center). They are focusing on diversifying the customer base and funding streams for the center. They are trying to align the customers with workforce needs are going through a transformation. Also, on the physical level of the facility and the infrastructure so they can make it more modern for learning and the working environment. She noted that they were having conversations with the Department of Human Services and were hoping to collaborate across DHS programs to develop customized training and programs. They were also working with Deputy Secretary Shelia Ireland and Tara Loew with apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. They were also working with Starbucks to potentially develop a barista training and had an initial conversation with Amazon. They were also working with a lot of the comprehensive rehab centers across the United States to see how they can work to fulfill the fulfillment centers to get people within the warehousing space in order to get them placed into employment. They were also looking at some types of customized training and stackable credentials and measurable skills gain in regard to the medical field. She then touched on how technology is going to be key and when it comes to individuals with disabilities, they are really taking into account assistive technology which is very important for some of the students and they will try to bring some innovation into that space.

Agency Report- Department of Human Services

Hoa Pham then presented for the Department of Human Services on behalf of Acting Secretary Snead. She noted that DHS would like to share updates on a number of initiatives designed to stabilize and expand services to a number of vulnerable populations. That includes one expanding income eligibility guidelines for medical assistance for workers with disabilities program. The expansion includes offering individuals earning in excess of 250% of federal poverty income guidelines. 250% for a family of one is a little under

34 grand a year. They are really excited about the new changes and its ability to alleviate the burden for a fair number of workers across the Commonwealth maybe facing the difficult position between losing Medicaid benefits or taking promotions are increasing their earnings. She then shared an update on their ENT programs. In 2019 the department set a multiphase effort for training programs with the goal towards drastically improving the economic stability outcomes for TANF and SNAP recipients across the Commonwealth. They launched a redesigned system in 2020 with their local partners. That design included expanded work with and engaged in support. She then noted that at this time, the Department is not moving forward with the previously planned vendor procurement and instead will be fully investing their resources and time on building upon their existing momentum and working to strengthen the system. They will also be focusing on deepening their efforts to connect those recipients to a broad range of support services, education training options, and types of support that they need to connect to meaningful job opportunities. The Department is currently meeting with local board partners to share some of those priorities and how they think they can advance and build a system in 2022 and solicit input on other ways the department can support driving forward those shared priorities.

Ms. Pham then shared an update on a couple of the Department's efforts to stabilize two mission-critical industries across the Commonwealth that have weathered the pandemic. The Department is working to allocate about \$140 million to address recruitment, retention, and COVID staff expenses specifically for direct care workers. Then as the second target industry, the product is prepared to make significant investment to support the childcare workforce to support the Commonwealth with at least \$630 million to allocate to offset the impacts of childcare enrollment, losses of revenue, and increased costs related to COVID 19 mitigation.

Agency Report- Department of Aging

David Miles had nothing to add to report in the briefing book.

Agency Report- Department of Community and Economic Development

Gwen Ross then provided a report for DCED. She noted that their WEDnet program continues to see a significant demand for training. They are seeing more interest coming for their apprenticeship grant program having awarded grants in the industries of IT, manufacturing, trades, and energy, as well as others. They also have their manufacturing training to career grant program that has two focuses in the program. They are working with those of barriers to employment in gaining the skills they need to enter into the manufacturing industry. There is also a student awareness component, and they are seeing more and more applications focus on developing awareness programs around the career opportunities in the manufacturing industry and working on the pipeline to develop the talent that industry needs. The Pennsylvania Manufacturing Advisory Council hosted 12 facilitative focus group meetings across the Commonwealth between December and January. The topics of discussion focused on workforce technology and innovation, the business environment, and supply chain. The information learned will help aid in the development of the manufacturing industry playbook that should be completed by June. She then remarked how Deputy Secretary Williams had mentioned the NGA digital literacy grant. In early December 2021, the state broadband plan working group met for three days to begin developing a comprehensive and implementable state plan for broadband. Later in December, House Bill 2071 established the Pennsylvania Broadband Authority. The authority will act as the sole entity for all broadband activity within the Commonwealth and the first meeting would be held later in February.

Agency Report- Department of Corrections

Amy Schwenk noted that DOC is challenged with the recruitment of new staff and retaining existing staff. They are currently at a 7% vacancy rate. She noted that they have particularly hit on the medical side of their nursing staff. However, they were planning on implementing a thorough recruitment and retention plan for correction officers and medical staff. For reentrants, they are working with the First Lady on some initiatives for the female reentrants. They are also partnering with the Governor's Office and the White House on new initiatives that includes reentrants obtaining CDLs. They are looking at expanding their CDL simulators. They were excited to announce that they did receive a second chance grant for almost \$900,000 which will help them expand that program even more. She also gave a shoutout to Dorenda Hamarlund.

Agency Report- Department of Agriculture

Secretary Russell Redding then showed appreciation to the Department of Labor and Industry and Secretary Berrier and her team for continuing to work with the Department of Agriculture. He noted about their apprenticeships and that they celebrated National Apprenticeship Week in November. He then noted that two agriculture groups were awarded Industry Partnership grants, one in Southeast PA and the other in South Central PA. They have continued to see an increase in the use of the H2A program in production and agriculture. Like the other federal immigration and temporary worker programs, they are looking at the data collection through a consulting firm to get a better handle on who was here, what the employers need, as well as some demographic information. They are also having continued involvement and engagement with the business community.

Agency Report- Department of Education

Julie Kane started giving the report on behalf of Dr. Garcia and Secretary Ortega. They have approved some career pathways. To date, 4 LEAs had implemented 23 programs as pathway models. They have also established an application process for schools to request that new industry credentials or providers be added to industry recognized credentials lists. They have the Career Ready PA Coalition that was developed to share best practices and strategies statewide. They had a meeting in December 2021 that highlighted SkillUp PA and the Metrix Learning platform. They are excited to talk about the temporary nurse aides and other efforts to increase access to nurse aide training. In November of 2020, Act 138 was created to create a pathway for temporary nurse aides who were working under the federal emergency waiver with a pathway to be a certified nurse aide (CNA). They worked with a vendor to develop it. As of January 2022, there were over 600 applications submitted to PDE. Of those 441 were processed for testing and 251 were returned to the individuals. In addition, they received feedback from the Long-Term Care Council and the PA WDB, and others about how they can not only get more people into nurse aide training programs but also to increase the amount of nurse aide instructors. Dr. Garcia then picked up the presentation. She noted that Amanda Harrison of Adult Education was getting ready to release a grant competition for federal and state adult basic education and family literacy funds this spring. For PAsmart, they were going to be releasing the Advancing Computer Science and STEM education grants. The Career Ready PA Backup Challenge was being planned for May 12th and 13th 2022. It is part of the remake learning days across America. She then provided some updates from the Bureau of Career and Technical Education. She mentioned some of the pathways that they are providing. Seven schools and CTCs have implemented 23 approved programs as this pathway model. For the CTE industry recognized credentials, the bureau drew up the notification process that Ms. Kane had mentioned.

Matt Yarnell appreciated the move that the Department made in regard to CNA training. Dr. Sygielski echoed that sentiment. Ms. Kane said with the LPN's, they are putting finishing touches on the wording. It applies to post-secondary programs.

Committee Update- Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement

Dr. John "Ski" Sygielski then gave the update. He noted that he wanted to celebrate Chair Brown for his work on social media in talking about the workforce. Chair Sygielski then noted that the committee had been conducting focus groups. So far they had met with agriculture and healthcare. The most common denominator between both of them had to do with workforce retention. He noted that over the next several months, February, April, June, and August, they would be holding additional focus groups and facilitate those groups for business, hospitality, construction, and manufacturing.

Committee Update- Career Pathways and Apprenticeship

Chair Rick Bloomingdale noted that the committee is trying to align their goals with the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act. They continue to work with the Apprenticeship and Training Office to make sure the opportunities are available to employers and employees and out of work people in PA.

Committee Update- One-Stop Service Delivery System

Chair Sarah Hollister remarked that the One-Stop committee had met several times over the past quarter. At every meeting they received an update on what actions have been taken on the last recommendation about the overall professional development of those who work within the PA CareerLink®. They have seen a lot of progress in that. There has been some thinking on direct training where they are waiting to hear back about some recommendations based on the analysis of career advisors in the PA CareerLink® and they have been thinking through some of the larger policy changes within Labor and Industry that can be done to help foster that. They are going to be working closely with Tara Williams and the Governor's Office on the digital equity plan. They had a very interesting and compelling presentation from some older workers in Lancaster County expressing some of their concerns about being able to get employed. The committee is looking to the Center of Workforce Information and Analysis for worker trends in order to better understand what might be going on.

Chair Brown asked Chair Hollister to shed more light on that. Chair Hollister responded that it was a lot of conversation about the challenges that they had faced and from their standpoint, they see that there are a lot of employers who want employees but when they go and interview for jobs, they don't necessarily get them. So, they are wondering, is there a digital skills piece going on? Chair Brown asked if they were trying to understand from an employer's perspective what the gaps are.

Committee Update- Youth

Chair Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend noted that the Youth Committee has been focused on equity through the lens of how to get into the fight and share innovative strategies to expand equity and access to stem-based education. That exploration has led to many new insights including more information about the economic earning potentials in the field as well as what other states are doing to promote STEM education. Particularly, they have been exploring the strategy of diploma fields and what that means to have that designation for employees and students. What does that mean for learning STEM-based curriculum? She noted that the committee wants to make sure that their recommendation is applicable

to people who are in school in traditional sense and have not found a comparable standard for STEM programming. The committee wants to keep equity as a focal guiding point. They are also actively trying to integrate members of the committee from the Department of Education as they are currently in the process of revising the science standards. They are also continuing to explore the best strategies to promote stem education because they know about the high economic earning potentials and what to make sure that the educational experiences are on par.

Committee Update- Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc

Chair Matt Yarnell noted that the report was in the briefing book but that they also have a sub-committee and the committee working on taking a look at medical technicians and how they could be used in skilled nursing facilities. Chair Yarnell then thanked the Governor and the legislature for working very quickly to move ARPA funds to hospitals and targeting that workforce retention. It allows that money to pass along to workers directly. He noted that healthcare has been through it in the last two years and they are still going through it.

Chair Brown asked if like other industries, because of massive shortages, were they seeing wages go up to address that. Chair Yarnell said that some big health systems have been allowed to move cash to the retention payments to employees that hold the line but there are some staff that are deciding to be a travel nurse and double their salary. At the moment the workforce is transitioning to gig work and that is scary when one thinks about healthcare and the importance of the bedside. Employers have definitely invested in retention and lifting wages in a very significant way.

Julene Champion from Geisinger Health System agreed with Chair Yarnell. They recently introduced retention bonuses for their nurses as well as a raise in their hourly rates. They were also getting ready to introduce an internal travel program to try and stop their nurses from leaving to travel extensively throughout the US and instead travel throughout their service areas. They are trying to be as creative as they can.

Committee Update- Reentry Ad Hoc

Co-chair Jeff Abramowitz noted that the committee is really proud of the work that they have done. Right now, they were seeing an amazing change in the labor market where employers across the Commonwealth and across the county are now opening their doors wider to men and women with justice involvement. They have identified 12 action items that they will be looking at in the course of the year. The top action items include things like reviewing accountability standards or key performance indicators for employers that are stepping up and want to be reentry friendly. The committee is looking at initiatives on background checks. They will be continuing their employer roundtable discussions across the Commonwealth and creating a more robust data system to identify and recognize the value that returning citizens bring to employers across the Commonwealth and county. They have been meeting on a regular basis with the Pennsylvania Reentry Council. Co-chair Abramowitz gave a shoutout to Mary Hoskins for all of her work.

Committee Update- Continuous Improvement

Chair Brian Funkhouser noted he didn't have a lot to add to the report in the briefing book but that the met last on January 25 and part of the committee's responsibilities are to work with the state team on digital transformation.

The Board then took a 10-minute break.

PA CareerLink® Common Digital Intake Project Presentation

Matt Flinner, the Director of Transformation at the Department of Labor and Industry, began his presentation. He noted that a big reason for the change is that because of the varied intake forms across the state, is that the state doesn't understand the customers. They don't understand the demographics, the types of people, their needs, and their problems when they are trying to remove their barriers to employment. The whole goal of the project is to help remediate those goals to employment and providing exceptional customer service to all of those that they serve. The project started about a year ago. Their hope is that once it goes live, the impact of the form will be that all PA CareerLink® offices see improved customer service. They will know all those that they serve but will also know more about those they do not serve. It will provide them longitudinal data over time, and they have targeted improvements to the process including training people to make sure they are striving to improve service for all of the customers over time. The sub goals for the project is to take into consideration that they are trying to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in the form. Obviously, some of the barrier questions are not something that most people would tell a total stranger. From that they are really trying to soften the question and how they ask to ensure that all of the customers are willing to give them the data they are trying to get. They are also putting in a process for transferring barrier information as the data they collect in a digital intake form will pre-populate a lot of the program enrollment forms. They will have demographic information on all of those that they serve. They will understand more about the communities they are serving co-identify why that is and what they need to do to improve. They are also trying to improve the customer experience in the PA CareerLink®. Also, while the project is not physically removing any barriers, they can see that it is a valuable tool to lowering the shield a bit to make the programs more accessible to customers. One of the big things the project has done so far is created a group of change champions. There is roughly one change champion or representative from every PA CareerLink® office. They first met with them over the summer of 2021 and have been meeting with them about once a month since. They are communicating to them what is coming and other processes that are changing and how they need to train staff.

They are keenly aware that digital literacy is a concern and there are some customers with low digital literacy. The next focus group coming later this year is putting a tablet with a form loading into someone's hand and being open to see how they interact with it and be able to complete it. Most of their meetings in 2022 have focused on design. Ultimately, they will standardize the way every single PA CareerLink® office taken in customers, asks questions, and collects data. As of the Board meeting, they were getting ready to enter development. That process is probably going to take roughly six months. They are probably thinking August or September is when the tool might be ready. They will launch with some pilot offices and then they will roll it out to all of the PA CareerLink® offices. While that is happening, they are continuing to engage the change champions. They will train the staff to use the tool to help customers and understand the data they have on the backhand and how to interpret it so they can operationalize it and make smart decisions moving forward.

The project team has also been providing the change champions with a series of communication tools. They were designed to be printed and it gives a simple snapshot of what the project is. Those materials also explain who is impacted and why they are changing the process. As of now, the intake form was at about 30 questions. The first half collects demographic info, and the second half asks barrier questions. The form has business logic built into it. They have two workflows so that new customers can interact

with the digital intake form as well as returning customers. Someone can also fill out the customer profile at home and then go to the PA CareerLink® office. The form is set up through the Keystone ID. At the very end of the form, they have a customer service question to help the offices and the state understand if the digital intake form is making the process easier. They are also planning to get wall mounted tablets for customers to fill out the form. Mr. Flinner then provided some mock-ups that can be seen in the briefing book. He noted that they built in little buttons into the form that can provide more information on what the question is asking. He noted that the new form will be tied into CWDS. CWDS will house everything that they will collect in the digital intake form. He noted that Deloitte, CWIA, and OVR were all involved. There are also multiple different taskforces that include various stakeholders. There is also a rumor versus myth fact sheet about the project to clear up misconceptions.

Wendie DiMatteo Holsinger remarked that she was concerned that the business community was not involved in the effort. Mr. Flinner responded that they had not had specific conversations yet with business, but they are now started outreach starting with the PA WDB Continuous Improvement committee. He noted that they were not trying to keep people in the dark as they would like to hear other voices. If anyone was interested in any specific groups or the whole project in general, they could reach out to himself or James Martini.

Ms. DiMatteo Holsinger clarified that she thinks that the process should also be easy for the business community to connect to all of the digital forms. That is really where the success is from her perspective. Chair Brown asked if businesses interacted with the form in any way. Mr. Flinner said no.

Mr. Martini asked Mr. Kuba to talk a little about a current procurement that the state has on how they do business services in the Commonwealth with respect to workforce. Mr. Kuba said that it is one component of a multi-tier project. They are looking at updating and collecting information about the customer. They have talked to numerous employer groups about the things they want and the things they need. The intake form will collect a lot of information about the individual themselves so that they can direct those people to employers and have them matched up with the skill sets of support to the employer. As part of that review, they are doing a competency review of the workforce development system. Part of that review is how they engage and incorporate and serve all customers. The system serves a dual purpose: the employer and the employee.

Secretary Allison Jones then commented that she thinks the work is super exciting. She remarked that when she was with the PA Workforce Development Board, they had an interagency group that included local partners that was looking at how they could better enroll customers in more than one program so that they could receive services that more comprehensively meet their needs. One of the things that that group had talked about was the fact that a lot of local areas had different intake forms. It was not a uniform customer experience. They had not made a recommendation to move forward with a common intake form but it was a part of their discussion around customers and how to be able to better serve them.

Chair Brown asked if the intake form could be done on someone's cell phone. Matt Flinner responded that they had been talking about that a lot. One of the steps is to take the digital intake form off of a tablet and put it on a desktop computer. He noted that it is a web-based tool, not an app. He noted that they also have a paper back-up plan for if a customer has a digital literacy concern or a disability. Chair Brown made a comment about people filling out the form at home. Kelsey from Deloitte said that the digital intake form being available in a customer's home is a plan for a future phase. They are very aware of any security concerns when entering the personal information on a personal device. Matt Flinner noted that

80% of customers interact with the homepage on a cell phone. That is most definitely a direction they are headed to try to make services more accessible and mobile form across the board.

Dan Kuba then added that they the state is trying to identify all of the different PA CareerLink® offices that they will be able to put interns in over the summer to work with customers. Sarah Hollister then remarked that she was curious about how it might help facilitate seamless ways to connect folks to benefits and benefit access. She asked if there was any thought on a check box to be automatically screened for potential benefits. Someone replied that that they asked those questions, and it would become a red flag on the staff facing screens to see if staff can remove barriers to employment. Sarah replied that what she was asking was more of an open question. She said instead of staff having to have a conversation about each benefit, if the screening check box could be a go ahead to screen those people. Matt Flinner responded that they never considered it as an option, but he would take it to their drawing board.

Chair Brown then asked if they had gotten any pushback about using a statewide form instead of a local. Matt Flinner responded that there had been some pushback and some resistance to change but nothing insurmountable. They have been hearing that every office is unique, and they have their own processes and are reluctant to get out of their standard way of doing things. He noted that they are giving them a voice though. They are also discussing the possibility of letting locals slightly alter the forms and add additional questions in the future.

PA WIOA Combined State Plan Modification and Public Comments Presentation

James Martini noted that under federal law, the state is required to put together a plan that improves Titles I, II, III, and IV. PA decided to submit a combined plan that includes a number of additional partners. Those include Career Technical Information, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Trade Adjustment, Jobs for Veterans, Senior Community Service and Employment Programs, the Community Services Block Grant, the Reimplementation Program for Reentrants, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This is the first time that PA has included the SNAP program in the State Plan. Mr. Martini noted that the plan for this year had increased focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. There was also an updated plan for employer and customer service delivery.

Mr. Martini then reviewed public comments that were received for the state plan. He said they reviewed 8 comments. The first comment was from Unique Source Products and Services, and they thanked the state for prioritizing positive employment outcomes for those with disabilities. The state response was that they were going to continue prioritizing positive employment outcomes in alignment with the employment first policy. Five out of the seven remaining comments focused on two policies that the state is required to have. The next comment was about targeted industry clusters. Pennsylvania has been a leader in targeted industry cluster data since 2004. The request asked that the state get back into the practice of publishing the data online. Mr. Martini noted that it is published in the plan. They are committing to getting those published online again by July 1, 2022. Comment three had several elements from PWDA (Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association). The first piece was that it would have been nice to see the TANF and OVR portions of the plan in the draft that was put out for public comment. Mr. Martini agreed but deadlines and timing made the plans go through their own public engagement process. The TANF portion was with the plan the Board had and the OVR portion would be included shortly. The other part of the comment dealt with how they properly support the PA CareerLink® system through the contributions of different partners. He said they are doing a wholly separate process on the MOU and funding process because it is such a critical piece. All of the impacted agencies will have a chance

to weigh in. The next comment was about the infrastructure funding policy. It is slated to go out for public comment in May 2022. The next comment from PWDA was essentially supporting comments from a group of organizations that also had comments. Comment six came in from Pennsylvania State University. It had to deal with people living with HIV and AIDS. It talked about how they receive services from OVR. PA's comment was that they will continue to support those with disabilities and specifically address those living with HIV in the next three year statewide comprehensive needs assessment. The last two comments came from Community Legal Services and was consigned by the Employment Program Committee which advises DHS, Community Justice, and the Coalition for Low Income Pennsylvanians. Very similar to the MOU and infrastructure funding policy, it is about the priority of service policy. For both comments they want to make sure because of how important the process is that it will go through its own public engagement process and interagency review. It is slated to occur later in February.

Mr. Martini noted that the state had until March 15th to get it into the portal and respective federal agencies would review the plan and submit feedback. The plan is set to take effect on July 1, 2022. Chair Brown asked when the next one would be due. Mr. Martini responded that it would be submitted in March 2024 and would take effect on July 1, 2024.

PA WIOA Combined State Plan Modification VOTE

Chair Brown announced that he was seeking a motion to approve the PA WIOA Combined State Plan.

MOTION: Dr. John Sygielski made the motion to approve the PA WIOA Combined State Plan. Bob McAuliffe seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Martini thanked everyone for their contributions to the State Plan.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

Chair Brown adjourned the meeting.