

## PA WDB Quarterly Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

11:00AM to 2:00PM

Zoom

### Meeting Minutes

#### Attendance

##### Members:

- Chair Jeff Brown
- Idayat Adewunmi
- Denise Andahazy
- Shannon Austin
- Senator Camera Bartolotta
- Acting Secretary Jennifer Berrier
- Richard Bloomingdale
- Representative Morgan Cephas
- Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger
- Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend
- Brian Funkhouser
- Nick Gilson
- Commissioner Robert J. Harvie, Jr.
- Brad Hollabaugh
- Sarah Hollister
- Gerardo Interiano
- Timothy James
- Marguerite Kline
- Henry Nicholas
- Commissioner Michael Pipe
- Tom Redden
- Frank Sirianni
- Secretary Meg Snead
- Jessica Trybus
- Dionne Wallace-Oakley
- Senator Lindsey Williams
- Matt Yarnell
- Deputy Secretary Tara Williams for Governor Tom Wolf
- Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko for Secretary Dennis Davin
- Paige Riegner for Representative Ryan Mackenzie
- Tim Griffin for Bob McAuliffe
- Julie Kane for Acting Secretary Noe Ortega
- Sara Gligora for Secretary Russell Redding
- David Miles for Secretary Robert Torres
- Amy Schwenk for Secretary John Wetzel

##### Presenters:

- Amy Schwenk, Department of Corrections
- Deputy Secretary Tara Williams, Governor's Office
- Acting Secretary Berrier, PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Deputy Secretary Shelia Ireland, PA Department of Labor and Industry
- Acting Secretary Meg Snead, PA Department of Human Services
- Executive Director Shannon Austin, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Dave Miles, PA Department of Aging
- Sara Gligora, PA Department of Agriculture

- Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko, PA Department of Community and Economic Development
- Julie Kane, PA Department of Education
- Mohona Siddique, PA Department of Labor and Industry Policy Office
- Abby Smith, Team Pennsylvania
- Hope Lineman, Clarion University
- Dr. Kate Akers, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education
- Jake Roman, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education
- Cynthia Pritchard, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education Foundation
- Rachel Hirsh, National Governors Association
- James Martini, Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee and Continuous Improvement Committee
- Rick Bloomingdale, Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee
- Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Youth Committee
- Matt Yarnell, Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee
- Sarah Hollister, One-Stop Service Delivery System Committee
- Jeffrey Abramowitz, Reentry Ad Hoc Committee

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

## **Welcome and Introductions**

### **Chair's Updates**

Chair Brown began the meeting. He said that he was seeking a motion to approve the minutes from the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Instructions were then given on how to use the platform for the meeting.

**MOTION:** Matt Yarnell made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 10<sup>th</sup> PA WDB meeting. Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brown then introduced a new member, Gerardo Interiano. Mr. Interiano announced that he is the Vice President of Government Relations and Public affairs for Aurora. He said they were headquartered in Pennsylvania and was excited to work and learn from the PA WDB.

Chair Brown then introduced Tara Williams with the Governor's Office. She said she was the Deputy Secretary of Policy and Planning working with the Department of Labor and Industry and the Department of Education. She noted that she was stepping into Allison Jones' old position. She served for several years as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Department of Human Services where she focused on workforce initiatives. She also worked in the policy office at the Department of Labor and Industry. Prior to that he career was largely in community college programs and a school counselor.

### **Agency Report- Department of Corrections**

Amy Schwenk commented that they had begun vaccinating not only the inmates but their reentrants as well. They did it in a coordinated effort with the Department of Health. She said their intent was to provide them with the safest reentry possible and that included possibly receiving vaccinations. She noted that as of the PA WDB meeting, they were about halfway done with the vaccination of their inmate population.

She summarized that Dorenda Hamarlund, their workforce development specialist, had 5 meetings or virtual job reentry fairs throughout the state since the last quarter. She was continuing to reinforce the benefits of hiring reentrants. Prior to COVID they had high employment rates for reentrants but that dipped. In February she spoke with the central PA chamber about hosting a series of workshops for their members. In April, Deputy Secretary Kelly Evans and some reentry staff presented to the criminal justice reform caucus on how the department had adjusted operations to keep staff, inmates, and reentrants safe during the pandemic. Ms. Schwenk remarked that they were once again hoping to have reentry fairs and would be coordinating with a lot of people in the community to talk about employment that is available to them. She said that vaccination rates in the institutions was around 75 to 80%. Chair Brown thanked Ms. Schwenk for the presentation.

### **Governor's Office Updates**

Deputy Secretary Tara Williams then presented. She thanked James and the team and OVR for the new Zoom platform and for incorporating the captioning and ASL as it is very important. The first update that she wanted to mention was the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center. She remarked that they were up and running again and there had been a work done on several recommendations over the past year. The Governor's Back to Work PA plan included a focus on addressing several of the various issues that were identified in the Command Center's report. She said that going forward the Command Center would be putting a structure together to ensure that the additional prioritized recommendations were put into action. The work group areas include child care, training, reentry, licensure, and government infrastructure. They are responsible for facilitating the actions to implement the recommendations within each of those areas. It is a really targeted and concrete effort as the focus on pandemic recovery.

Deputy Secretary Williams then remarked that the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) was in the process of a proposed redesign. The week prior, the Board of Governors voted to open a 60-day public comment period on the proposed plans that aim to strategically merge several campuses as a way to revitalize the state system. As of last week, any member of the public could make comments on the plans using the website, email, mail, or the scheduled public hearings. They were encouraging people to take a look at the proposal and submit comments on the website so that the chancellor's office and all the members of the Board of Governors could see what the proposed impact might be.

The last thing that Deputy Secretary Williams wanted to comment on was the initial response to some of the major investment plans recently announced by President Biden. Both the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan reflect the historic investment and infrastructure and supported families. She said they were broadly supportive. They recognize the benefit that the plans would have for Pennsylvania including direct impact to Pennsylvanians who have been most effected by the pandemic. They see the investments as paving the way for equitable access to economic stability. Back in January, the Governor provided a letter to the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation emphasizing the need for investment in a robust infrastructure package and find that the job plan focuses on many of those same priorities. It includes some traditional things like highways and bridges to newer things like broadband, childcare, housing, and other items. The plan is largely built on the administration's previous Restore PA plan which focused on infrastructure as well as the current back to work plan. She said they would see what the actual investments might look like as Congress puts details to those plans but they know it will be really

important that everyone across agencies work together to meet the workforce needs that might arise. Finally, she said she knew of a couple of requests urging agency updates for Board member participation so when the Board hears those requests, they will think about participating.

### **Agency Report- Department of Labor and Industry**

Acting Secretary Berrier then reported out that the Department paid out over \$42.5 billion in unemployment benefits across six programs. She said for perspective, the highest amount of benefits they ever paid out was \$4.74 billion and that was in the Great Recession of 2009. She said that it shows the impact of the pandemic has had on Pennsylvania and its workers. The Department had received over 6 million unemployment applications, that is for traditional unemployment and applications for the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. The PUA program serves individuals, in a population they had never served before of independent contractors, gig workers, and business owners. Although she was happy to report that they have in the spring been experience a decrease in initial claims, last week alone they had received 40,000 initial applications for both programs. She said that they would be going live with their new UC modernized computer system and it was set for June 8<sup>th</sup>. She said that she believed it was one of the largest projects the Commonwealth had undertaken IT-wise. There was more information regarding that project on the Department's website and they were going to be having multiple workshops for their claimants, employers, and other stakeholders throughout the months of May and June. They also have multiple user guides and will be consistently releasing information.

Chair Brown asked if there were plans to start requiring the unemployed to start looking for work? Acting Secretary Berrier commented that they were currently suspended under the Governor's emergency declaration and the Department was looking into a phased approach. They were meeting with stakeholders to discuss those plans. They have to be very strategic about what they do because with the number of individuals that they have on unemployment, they have to make sure they don't crash the system with work registration. It never handled that kind of traffic before and they also have to make sure they are not crushing the PA CareerLink® as well. She then remarked that the work search and work registration requirements are not going to be the silver bullet that a lot of employers think it is going to be. She believes that there are other factors aside from unemployment that are attributing to those issues.

Senator Camera Bartolotta then remarked that she had multiple contacts from employers that were telling her that they can't get their workers back to work because they claim they're collecting more on unemployment and the \$300 a week subsidy. They don't want to get back to work until that subsidy runs out in September. There are businesses who were hanging on by a thread until restaurants and bars and taverns could open at 75%. They made it through what they thought was the storm and that was only the eye. She said she was telling all of them if they have offered suitable employment to those employees and they refuse because they claim they're collecting more by staying at home they quit. They are getting offers from people who want to get paid under the table so they can keep getting unemployment and their subsidy but the businesses are not going to participate in illegal activity. She asked how they can address the issue and make sure that the individuals understand that while there is a backlog at the unemployment office, it is going to catch up to them. If they refuse suitable work because they want to collect, that is justification for termination and they would be paying back what they owe the unemployment compensation office. How can they facilitate that message? Acting Secretary Berrier said that individuals need to understand that they are not permitted to refuse suitable work. If their employer has work for them, that is a reason that they could not be eligible potentially for unemployment benefits.

She said that she completely understands the stresses and issues that are currently going on with employers and she sympathized wholeheartedly. She remarked that Deputy Secretary Shelia Ireland would be able to discuss some initiatives that they had going on. She would be able to highlight some of the resources that they were using at PA CareerLink® to help reach out to dislocated workers and connect them with employment. Individuals who are currently getting unemployment run the risk that when the federal benefits expire at the beginning of September, they run the risk of perhaps not being able to find good employment. She said that the Department needs to do its part to make sure that we have individuals who are able to find employment opportunities and make sure that they are connecting them with the right training opportunities so that they would be meeting employer's needs.

Rick Bloomingdale then reiterated what the acting secretary said about the training sessions. They were putting them out there. It is a substantial change but the Department is really doing a big effort on trying to make these resources available. He said the new system should be pretty good from what he has seen so far. He advised people to take advantage of the training sessions. He then said that he had to push back on that Senator Bartolotta said about folks not going back to work because of the \$300. He said that the restaurant minimum wage is \$2.75 so of course they were not going to get people back. He said that unemployment is never more than 50% of what a person took home so if that \$300 was putting someone over what they were making as an employee, then they probably were not being paid enough. He remarked it would be \$300 a week and that nobody can live on \$400 a week. He said he would encourage those employers to pay more money to get those workers back. If that means adding \$0.10 to their burger, add the \$0.10 to the burger. He also said that nobody should go back to an unsafe workplace so if an employer is going to open up their place to make sure that it is safe. He said that he knows that most businesses if not all of them want to do that and follow the CDC recommendations so that they do have any kind of liability risk. He said that this isn't the place to debate minimum wage but he wanted to make sure that another side was out there and to make sure that people are taking advantage of the unemployment compensation training sessions as they're incredibly helpful for employers and claimants. Senator Bartolotta that the jobs there she presented were at \$23 and \$30 an hour for those chefs to come back to the restaurants and continue working. She said it wasn't the dishwashers but they were suffering on all levels and she agrees with most of what he said.

Deputy Secretary Ireland then said that they tend to focus on one issue when they are talking about people going back to work and it is wages but the reality is for a lot of organizations, they are encountering a new level of competition that they have seen before. Regarding organizations that rose in the midst of the pandemic, specifically logistics and transportation, their entry level points are just as simple as others and they are paying a lot more. The other thing is that a lot of times they say they are paying sufficient wage but not offering full-time employment and benefits until a year or in some cases, three years later. People have a choice in the labor market and will make that choice. She thinks as they move forward the issues become if they elevated their HR practices in a way that confronts the new reality in the world of work or are they continuing to do what they used to do and expecting the same result. Deputy Secretary Ireland then said that the deputate had been very busy over the last quarter. She noted that there were three specific categories of work that she wanted to remark upon. The first is enhancing service delivery, the second is building new programs, and the third is program administration and oversight. They made physical upgrades to the Pennsylvania CareerLink® including new furnishings and adding CC TVs to be ADA compliant. They also expanded Wi-Fi so they have the opportunity to cross the digital divide. They are improving direct service by providing an assessment of their career advisers. They have 600 across the

state whose role is to connect UC and other under employed participants with employee workforce development services. They added five trade navigators, one for each region across the state so that they effectively leverage the \$42 million they get on an annual basis. They are also continuing their proactive outreach to dislocated workers and potential UC exhaustees. In the past, UC recipients had to reach out to workforce development but now workforce development reaches out to them.

Deputy Secretary Ireland then moved onto new programs. She remarked that the state awarded multiple grants over the last quarter in digital literacy, school to work, and near completers. Digital literacy is about expanding their footprint in terms of PC computing centers. They made 32 awards across the state. School to work is building a connected fabric between high school students, employers, and workforce development to facilitate career entry. Near completers is about innovative practices of connecting people rapidly to recognized credentials or associate degrees that they'll need to compete in this new world of work. Deputy Secretary Ireland then said that they put out significant dollars in apprenticeship and they were going after the expanse grant for \$6 million. Their main role is program oversight and administration. They were building an understanding of both the work that they do and how they can utilize funds effectively. That means youth development program manuals updated, Title 1 eligibility policies have been updates, Trade Act and Title 1 co-enrollment so that they can leverage and braid their funding. All of those policies were out. They were also reviewing the regional and local workforce development plans. The Southeast was complete and the rest would be completed by early June. Last but not least, as people were thinking around the shift in work, they were optimizing the work of financial aid in the Pennsylvania workforce development system.

#### **Agency Report- Department of Human Services**

Acting Secretary Meg Snead then gave an update on the pathways advisory committee. DHS in partnership with the Department of Education (PDE) received a policy acceleration grant from the institute to move forward with their parent pathways work. The parent pathways is an initiative to support single parents. The initiative includes supporting the whole family as the parent pursues their training and they will be looking at outcomes for both the parent and the children. As part of the 18-month grant project, they will be facilitating the parent pathways learning network. The purpose of it is to connect potential community-based organizations with technical assistance and learning opportunities to implement parent pathway models in their communities. The model should support parenting students in obtaining access to and success in post-secondary education utilizing a two generational approach. The departments will also be creating an advisory committee to provide input on policy recommendations to further support student parents. As they put together a diverse group of stakeholders for community participation, they are seeking a member of the PA Workforce Development Board to sit on the committee which will meet monthly or bimonthly during the duration of the grant. They were happy to circulate additional information. Chair Brown thanked her for her update.

#### **Agency Report- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Executive Director Shannon Austin then noted that they were still open for business. As the Board knows, they closed the order of selection within OVR since July of 2019. They had been continually releasing individuals from the waiting list. As of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, they were allowed to release over 2,400 individuals from their waiting list and they were working closely with the Governor and the front office in order to potentially release another group of individuals. They were in a good place financially as an agency and would probably be releasing individuals from the closed order of selection monthly. In doing so, their hope

was that in July that they were going to have the ability to open up the closed order of selection. One of the partnerships they were proud of working closely with is UC. They had about 140 individuals hired through that initiative. They hope that they are temporary jobs that are going to move into more permanent positions but it is allowing individuals to fill gaps within their resumes and get back to work. They were also heavily involved with the SSP program. The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services started to implement the program. They were utilizing two service providers on the west and eastern parts of the state to serve all of Pennsylvania with the service. The service is geared towards individuals that are deaf and blind and they are allowed community supports in the community in order to do some of the things that they need in order to be independent within the community. They have the ability to bring a national expert, Shannon Wright, to Pennsylvania to train providers on how to work with consumers. They also implemented the MOU between the Department of Education and OVR during that time working with transitioning students with disabilities from 14 to 21 years of age. They did a three-part webinar series where they explained to stakeholders the importance of the MOU. They had a lot of advocates involved in the rollout. She said they had some initiatives that they would be rolling out in the near future.

#### **Agency Report- Department of Aging**

David Miles said he didn't have anything to report at the time.

#### **Agency Report- Department of Agriculture**

Sara Gligora then gave the update in place of Secretary Russel Redding. She noted that agricultural workers were given priority access to the COVID vaccine. Many of the ag employers took advantage of the opportunity and the Department of Agriculture received great feedback from the industry about prioritizing the workforce. They will continue to provide support to employers as many of them continued to want to vaccinate their workers. They recently were working very closely with L&I to identify possible workforce opportunities specific to agriculture. They reached out to agricultural stakeholders from across the state to get feedback and input on their experience with the workforce development system. They hosted three stakeholder listening sessions with stakeholders from Team PA's ag advisory board and urban agricultural stakeholders. The calls were very informative and participants were very excited to be a part of those discussions. In addition to the cause, a stakeholder survey was created and was shared with over 100 stakeholders including employer, employees, and training providers with agriculture. The data and feedback from those calls and surveys will be used to help inform possible training or funding opportunities going forward. Also, the PA Commission on Agricultural Education Excellence collaborated with the PA Department of Education and stakeholder groups on suggested changes to the proposed PA standards for science and technology. The commission also developed a plan for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility which included the creation of an ad hoc committee focused on those issues. The committee has defined their mission and objectives which includes an upcoming diversity and equity assessment.

Ms. Gligora then talked about apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship. Since the February Board meeting, there were three new programs registered with the state. They include a butcher apprenticeship program with Penn State and two grounds keeper apprenticeship programs. They also registered a new agricultural pre-apprenticeship program. Some other workforce initiatives that they focused on include the PA Farm Bill's Ag and Youth program. The grant closed on March 5<sup>th</sup> and invests in workforce development initiatives for agricultural and youth organizations such as FFA and such. They received a total of 85 grant

applications from 32 different counties. The grant awards and announcements would be made soon. The projects focus on a range of things from education and workforce development including seminars, field trips, and agricultural safety training programs. Finally, Team PA recently released their updated agricultural economic impact study. The report highlights the importance of workforce within agriculture and the need to make workforce development a priority. The report shows that ag jobs represent approximately 5.8% of all private sector employment in PA. These jobs also support additional jobs in other industries through their indirect and induced impacts. One of the biggest highlights from the report was the longer term opportunities and threats for PA ag and the biggest focus was identified as workforce. In every round table discussion, it was agreed the biggest long term threat to PA agriculture is the inability to attract and maintain workers. It also has a focus on anti-immigration sentiments. The report identifies the need to make workforce development a priority. Chair Brown then thanked her for the report.

### **Agency Report- Department of Community and Economic Development**

Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko then talked about the Manufacturing Advisory Council (MAC) and they were hoping to have a strategy for workforce development as they move forward for the manufacturing industry.

### **Agency Report- Department of Education**

Julie Kane then gave the report for the Department of Education on behalf of Acting Secretary Noe Ortega. She said that PDE had been working with L&I in the Intermediate Unit 11 to develop a series of free online on demand training modules for PA CareerLink® and workforce development staff. The modules are available online. They are modules and courses that will introduce staff to the PA CareerLink® system. It also shares best practices and connects them with other resources. She also shared that in the briefing book there is a link to a blog that is a great way to hear from the Department of Corrections as it is inmate testimonials. Through the support from the PDE Division of Adult Education and the Penn State Institute for Student of Adult Literacy, they coordinated a peer tutoring program at SCI Muncy for inmates and it allows inmates to tutor other inmates. Also, PDE was beginning to promote the Career Ready PA Backpack Challenge which is a state-wide effort to encourage students to participate in events that would help them build their career portfolios. The event would begin May 6<sup>th</sup>. There are activities like take and make STEAM kits. There would also be hands on activities at community centers, libraries, and museums.

PDE also awarded \$10.8 million in PAsmart Advancing grants to 26 partnerships statewide. There are a couple of projects that include local workforce development boards. She then highlighted a few of those partnerships. She then talked about the 13% decrease in the career tech space with the centers. She said they worked hard to keep students on track. They transitioned some programs online while others were restructured. She reported that in the past, twice, PDE distributed federal relief aid to career tech centers to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and they received additional funding under the American Rescue Plan. Chair Brown asked if there were any questions and there were none.

### **Department of Labor and Industry on Future of Workers**

Mohona Siddique, executive policy specialist with the Department of Labor and Industry talked about their work examining the future of workers in the Commonwealth. Their aim is to guide short and long-term strategic investments for the Commonwealth's workers with a particular eye towards recovery from



the pandemic. They were going to be looking at lasting industry and occupational trends including the evolving nature of technology and automation as well as the changing nature of work and benefits. Their hope is that they can engage the Board to help compile a set of strategies to help prepare the Commonwealth's workers and help guide investments in both short and long term. They were working with James Martini to establish a future of workers working group. In terms of time commitment, they don't anticipate that it will be more than four to six hours over the course of several months. She noted that they had a consultant lined up to help execute the research. His name is Ann Gemmell out of Philadelphia.

Ann Gemmell then introduced herself. She said that she had worked with Deputy Secretary Ireland and worked in Southeast PA. That work helped develop a collaborative culture across different sectors and silos to start discussing the consensus around the problem and solutions. Prior to that she worked on the Pre-K initiative for Mayor Kenney and before that was multiple economic justice and labor advocacy issues and before that was a high school history teacher. She said the Board could read about some of her work and ideas at the Philadelphia Citizen.

Mohona asked that if anyone was interested in participating to please let James Martini know.

### **Pennsylvania's Educate4Opportunity Grants**

Abby Smith, who is the Director of Education and Workforce Development at the Team Pennsylvania Foundation then talked about Pennsylvania's Educate4Opportunity grant. She remarked that the Board heard about the grant starting back in 2019 and the PA Workforce Development Board had been a wonderful partner. They were excited to present some updates as they were reaching the conclusion of the grant in the end of June. They have post-secondary and higher education through the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Ed (PASSHE) but also through the Department of Education at the Governor's Office and the Department of Labor and Industry Workforce Development Board. When they got the planning grant, the idea was to connect and align post-secondary institutions and state workforce needs. Ms. Smith then handed over the presentation to the liaison through the National Governor's Association Rachel Hirsh who shared what the purpose of the grant was.

Rachel Hirsh then noted that she was a senior policy analyst at the National Governor's Association. The purpose of the initiative was to help states align efforts to reconnect or connect adults to education and training to lead to high quality careers and jobs. Pennsylvania was selected as one of six states through a competitive application process in 2019. She along with the team and NGA have been helping along with technical assistance including peer learning site visits. They also provided access to proprietary data from Strada-Gallup getting consumer insights about what they thought were their education barriers. The pandemic obviously shifted gears a little but she was happy with what the team was able to do.

Abby Smith remarked that in Pennsylvania, they wanted to reduce the near and partial completers but they know a lot of the goal is to connect them with those relevant post-secondary education opportunities with a focus towards closing existing workforce gaps. They know that is a significant population that are 25 to 64 year-olds in Pennsylvania that make up over a million people. When they think about workforce gaps, they know that it is going to take more than just high school graduates, they are going to have to look at the existing adult population and connect them with the post-secondary education opportunities they'll need to close those gaps. She noted that the cross agency team is really important. They also really

wanted the data so they could get a better sense of exactly why people step out and how they can better connect them with post-secondary opportunities.

Kate Akers then noted that she is the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Advanced Data Analytics in the system office for PASSHE. She remarked they wanted to begin looking at what is the population of stop-out specifically from PASSHE. She then showed the data and said they can really see the impact of stop outs over time. She said that roughly 120,000 students over the 15 years of data shown dropped out or stopped out. They define a stop out as not returning to a PASSHE university. She then reviewed the data further. She remarked that they know that graduates from the public institutions earn substantially higher wages than stop outs.

Hope Lineman then introduced herself and the strategic adviser to the Chancellor on workforce Innovation and Cynthia Pritchard introduced herself as President and CEO of the PASSHE Foundation.

Hope said it is just the beginning as they reinvent higher education and the process of upscaling and rescaling the adult population. She said to meet its workforce needs, Pennsylvania must significantly increase the number of adults with some post-secondary education or credential. Pennsylvania higher education is shrinking in the number of newly credentialed people it produces annually. With over 400,000 students seeking degrees or enrolled in certificate and other career development programs, it is an engine of social mobility and economic development which is essential to the future of the Commonwealth. It is also an opportunity for PASSHE to play a key role in addressing the critical need. Certificate programs must be a part of a stackable career pathway allowing individuals to pair learning and career progression instead of approaching them as sequential activities. She noted they partnered with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning on the project. The Prepared for PA initiative provides a flexible framework for training that enhances employer competitiveness and innovation while preparing learners across PA for jobs that pay. Pennsylvania is a very diverse economy and society, as part of the regional working group works, they saw the variances across the four regions. A new economy that is more automated and connected is emerging. Through the prepared for PA initiative, they were redesigning education to meet the up-skilling and reskilling needs of learners by creating educational pathways that meet them where they are at in their competency and skill set retainment. All of the work is to help advance equity, expand opportunities, and increase education retainment across the Commonwealth. Additionally, when there is employer engagement in designing programs that are aligned with their demands, the employer confidence in the efficacy in the short-term credentials is improved. That in turn improves the ability of the certificate holder to achieve economic success. As a result of the work and the regional workforce assemblies, they aligned competencies and skills needed for successful transitions in the workforce across six identified demand industries.

Competency maps are a part of the effort to bring together employers and educators to align skills and competencies needed for a successful transition in the workforce and can be used as a resource when building programs to train workers, job seekers, and students to meet employer workforce needs. That in turn will help develop a robust talent pipeline. The occupations that are included in the competency maps were identified as in demand through labor market data analysis using a blended prep approach of gather survey data as well as the CWIA's high priority occupations. She noted that some of the competencies and skills actually cross multipole industry sectors and learners will be able to transition as needed across multiple markets. She noted that the work would be supported through funding streams available like WIOA, Trade Act and several others. It is most importantly aligned with the HPO list. They were working

to establish pathways for degree program students to earn industry recognized credentials along the way so that when life does get in the way, students still have credentials for employment. The framework that they are building will allow the conversion of industry recognized credentials to credit creating strong partnerships system wide with business and industry across the Commonwealth and to build a more sustainable and equitable higher education system.

Chair Brown thanked them for the presentation.

### **Committee Update- Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement**

James Martini then provided the report for the Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee on behalf of Dr. John "Ski" Sygielski. Executive Director Martini commented that the information was included in the briefing book but they were excited about what the committee was developing for mission and principles. They had also discussed what they wanted to accomplish and wanted to develop a foundational priority for the partnership program in PA including bringing some of the employers involved in Industry Partnership to participate in committee activities.

### **Committee Update- Career Pathways and Apprenticeship**

Chair Richard Bloomingdale then noted that over the last quarter the committee had been committed to their strategic process. They had approved a purpose statement, as well as objectives and strategies that would guide their decisions. He said it was refreshing to hear so many departments in the state system and others talk about the opportunities that were out there for the workforce. One of the goals of the committee is to foster apprenticeship models that increase wages, skills industry, and career advancement, promoting equity and access in apprenticeship, implementing professional training programs to increase access and equity and identity in demand jobs, and career pathways to lead to family sustaining jobs. They also continue to support their recommendations in a competitive grant program as those elements are being implemented in future grants.

### **Committee Update- Youth**

Chair Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend noted that they have been focused on sub-goals 3.1 which is about identifying evidence-based models and promising practices in youth development. They also were focused on 3.7 which is all about career pathways development. She said that young people have been disproportionately impacted by the economic downturn. The unemployment rate for young people nationally between the ages of 16 to 24 is about 11.1%. They now have to focus on what promising practices will help young people remain engaged so they can be successful and compete in an evolving world of work. They are fortunate to have two presentations during the past quarter. The first was from the PA Workforce Development Association youth technical work group in which they provided the committee with some promising practices that they were experiencing and seeing across the Commonwealth. They would be using that to guide and explore recommendations that they think the Commonwealth should consider. The second presentation was from Casey Mindlin and he shared with them how STEM is impacting the current economic climate and job sector growth for the field but also some of the system issues that they committee should consider. There are currently 21,000 unskilled Pennsylvania jobs in computer science with an average of \$89,000 per year. Those are unfilled jobs that young people could fill and more than a self-sustaining wage. Those jobs are expected to grow by 10% over the next few years. It is important for them to prepare the next generation of workers to fill those

jobs that should be in their interest. In order to accomplish that goal Mr. Midland suggested that they focus in a few key areas. The first was addressing disparity in the sector. Currently employees are about 13% African American and 28% Hispanic which indicates an issue of equity that the committee will continue explore. The second systemic issue is the teach pipeline preparation in computer science fields on average teacher prep program only graduate three new teachers prepared to teach those subjects. They clearly have to have more professionals being able to teach young people those important and critical skills. The last systemic area was that only 59% of high schools offer computer science as a core subject. They may want to consider shifting their end game as it relates to core competencies in that area to include computer science. As a committee they intend to explore those recommendations further, to vet them with different departments across the commonwealth and understand what is happening specifically in PA to make recommendations.

### **Committee Update- Continuous Improvement**

Executive Director Martini then provided the report for the Continuous Improvement as Chair Brian Funkhouser wasn't able to. He noted that there was two things that the committee focused on in the last quarter. The first is a digital intake project for Pennsylvania CareerLink® as part of the commonwealth workforce development system of record. They also wanted to take on increasing public awareness around system performance. For the digital intake project, one of the things they recognized is there is a great variety across the Commonwealth on how individuals are greeted and triaged when they enter the 62 PA CareerLink® across the Commonwealth. They were partnering with Deloitte who runs CWDS. He remarked that they want to make sure that they are asking people questions in a way that they understand what they are being asked and in doing it in a way that helps them disclose the information that's being requested. A lot of the questions are uncomfortable or challenging whether or not someone has a disability whether or not they are on public assistance. If they ask those in a way that takes into consideration the challenges the customers may have in disclosing that information, they are more likely to get a better answer. They also want to remove unnecessary questions. Oftentimes, as a customer moves through the system, they are asked the same question by different people multiple times. Any way they can eliminate that lowers the burden on the customer and makes the process a little more seamless. The third leg is increasing the quality of the data they are getting from the customers. They want to make sure they are getting accurate and complete data on who is coming to the system and what their outcomes look like. The other piece of the report is information on workforce development system performance. The data in the briefing book is the negotiated levels of performance with the federal government. It covers how many of the local areas are hitting that performance as well as specific programs like youth, dislocated worker, etc. They may continue to dig deeper into local performance and look at performance and accountability over time.

### **Committee Update- Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc**

Chair Yarnell said he did not have a report at the time. The last two PA WDB meetings, they passed recommendations so the committee would continue to discuss future recommendations.

### **Committee Update- One-Stop Service Delivery System**

Chair Sarah Hollister noted that the committee was looking at the need for actionable data at the current one-stops, customer service, and staff support and training. In an attempt to narrow down the committee's first step, they did a survey of all of the committee members and determined that they wanted

to put forth a recommendation about PA CareerLink® staff training and development. It shows the importance of the PA CareerLink® staff as being key to the Commonwealth's economic development. The committee therefore wanted to put forth a recommendation that the state make strategic investments in professional development and training of PA CareerLink® staff. Of things that would be helpful are cultural awareness, informed care practices, customer service, and leadership development. The operations of the recommendation would be determined by each agency that has staff in PA CareerLink®. The committee would hope to have regular updates on the recommendation so they could make sure that a comprehensive state-wide professional development and pathway work is happening.

**MOTION:** Robert Harvie made the motion to approve the recommendation. Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Committee Update- Reentry Ad Hoc**

Co-chair Jeff Abramowitz noted that a virtual employer round table took place in April and they continue meeting with the Pennsylvania Reentry Council and the Attorney General's office. He gave a shout-out to the Governor and Attorney General for recognizing April as reentry month. So far they were putting together their priorities for 2021 and were looking at the recommendations that they would be proposing.

The first recommendation is that the Commonwealth should encourage usage of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and the federal bonding program for employers and hiring returning citizens. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry manages the federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit program and it enables employers to benefit from hiring returning citizens who often face significant barriers to employment. The program financially supports employers who hire individuals from targeted groups including returning citizens and encourage the Commonwealth to educate all employers on the benefits of the WOTC credit and federal bonding programs.

**MOTION:** Sarah Hollister made the motion to approve the recommendation. Henry Nicholas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The second recommendation is that the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry should indicate funding and programming for working with returning citizens who are unemployed or underemployed. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should support targeted programs for uniform reentry programming throughout the PA CareerLink® system, which includes a Reentry Accelerated Learning Opportunity with wrap-around support services, digital literacy, and digital access training. They encourage the Commonwealth to allocate funds to support the initiative.

**MOTION:** Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger made the motion to approve the recommendation. Henry Nicholas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The third recommendation is that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should dedicate a portion of the funding from the federal infrastructure funding to support returning citizens that are seeking training and gainful employment. The President and Congress are considering major infrastructure plan that will unify and mobilize the country to meet the great challenges of our times and provide funding for numerous infrastructure and capital improvements across the county. The Commonwealth should support reentry programming.

**MOTION:** Henry Nicholas made the motion to approve the recommendation. Matt Yarnell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

Chair Brown asked the Board if they liked the Zoom platform. There was a unanimous consensus that it was well liked.

Chair Brown sought a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION:** Henry Nicholas made the motion to adjourn. Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.