

PA WDB Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday August 11, 2021

10:00AM to 2:00PM

Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members:

- Chair Jeff Brown
- Idayat Adewunmi
- Shannon Austin
- Senator Camera Bartolotta
- Tim Bean
- Secretary Jennifer Berrier
- Richard Bloomingdale
- Julene Champion
- Representative Morgan Cephas
- Jessica Eberley
- Chekemba Fulmore-Townsend
- Brian Funkhouser
- Nick Gilson
- Commissioner Robert J. Harvie, Jr.
- Sarah Hollister
- Gerardo Interiano
- Timothy James
- Marguerite Kline
- Representative Ryan Mackenzie
- Henry Nicholas
- Jodi Pace
- Commissioner Michael Pipe
- Tom Redden
- Gregg Riefenstahl
- Representative Melissa Shusterman
- Frank Sirianni
- Jessica Trybus
- Laura Wand
- Deputy Secretary Tara Williams for Governor Tom Wolf
- Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko for Secretary Dennis Davin
- Tim Griffin for Bob McAuliffe
- Erin Donohoe for Secretary Noe Ortega
- Eryn Spangler for Secretary Russell Redding
- Carl Feldman for Acting Secretary Meg Snead
- David Miles for Secretary Robert Torres
- Amy Schwenk for Secretary John Wetzel

Presenters:

- Ed Legge, Center for Workforce Information and Analysis
- 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
- Executive Director Shannon Austin, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Dave Miles, PA Department of Aging
- Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko, PA Department of Community and Economic Development
- Amy Schwenk, PA Department of Corrections
- Erin Donohoe, PA Department of Education
- Eryn Spangler, PA Department of Agriculture
- Carl Feldman, PA Department of Human Services
- Kelly Kandratic, Team Pennsylvania
- James Martini, Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee, Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee, Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee, WIOA Combined State Plan Modification
- Brian Funkhouser, Continuous Improvement Committee

- Sarah Hollister, One-Stop Service Delivery System Committee
- Jeffrey Abramowitz, Reentry Ad Hoc Committee
- Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Youth Committee

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

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Jeff Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chair's Updates

Chair Brown said he was seeking a motion to approve the May 4, 2021 quarterly board meeting minutes.

MOTION: Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend made the motion. Senator Camera Bartolotta seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brown then congratulated Secretary Jennifer Berrier and Secretary Noe Ortega as they were both confirmed as secretary of their respective departments. Chair Brown then introduced Ed Legge of the Center of Workforce and Analysis to give a presentation on gauging the pandemic impact.

Ed Legge thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to talk to the Board today and give a high level look at how the pandemic has impacted the labor market in Pennsylvania. He said that he would show information showing where they were as far as the economy and labor market. He would also illustrate some data that show how the effects of the pandemic on the labor market and talk about tools that they developed to aid in the effort. He noted that the Center of Workforce Information and Analysis was part of the workforce development deputation at the Department of Labor and Industry. Their major role is to collect, compile, and produce estimates on Pennsylvania's labor market as it relates to the jobs in Pennsylvania, the labor force, the employed and unemployed. They do that by looking at data by various industries and occupations. Each state in the nation has an organization like CWIA. They are funded by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics based on the same methodology so the information is comparable across states and the information can roll up into national labor market statistics. Most of the data that they produce comes from employer surveys. He said they rely on the data from business surveys to produce quality and accurate information. It is critical that they have high response rates from employers so they can get down to the lowest level possible from a geographic perspective. They also use data from administrative records from the unemployment compensation system. In addition to recent data on the labor market, they also calculate performance metrics for the workforce system to gauge how effective the workforce system is in preparing people for jobs and getting them placed in employment. They also do all of the federally mandated reporting for the unemployment compensation system. They do various analyses on what is impacting the unemployment compensation system from a benefit perspective and tax perspective.

Mr. Legge said they have done a lot of customized data over the past year and a half. There are many questions regarding the impact of the pandemic that are still unanswered though. While there is anecdotal information and a lot of special studies done by various groups, there is a lot of gray area. A big question on the minds of everyone is why there are so many unfilled jobs and why are there so many people unemployed. He said there are a lot of factors being tossed around, questioning why people are not coming back to work. What is the impact of the prolonged unemployment compensation period? What is the impact of the extra \$300 being added to the weekly unemployment compensation checks? What is the impact of adding back work search requirements? They are continuing to research ways to

potentially provide some answers to some of those questions. He then remarked that they developed three dashboards over the last year and a half. They are mainly to meet the demand of customized requests that they are being asked. One of the reasons they went that route is to gauge the economy and mainly account of jobs and look at the labor force of employed and unemployed. The data was insufficient during the time of the pandemic mainly because the most detailed data set that they have that shows jobs by industry is lagged by about six or seven months. Compiling the data takes upwards of six months to get a clear picture of what the jobs are doing across Pennsylvania. While they do produce a monthly jobs report to show the impact of increased and decreased jobs in Pennsylvania, the data is based on a survey. It does not provide the industry detail or the sub-region detail. They also do produce monthly estimates on the labor force, the employed and unemployed. That only has a one month lag. A lot of people look at the unemployment rate as a major gauge of what is happening in the labor market. The demographic information is not available a reliable level to provide a good look at what is or was happening during the pandemic. Because of that they had to rely on the unemployment compensation claims data. The data is real time and it updated weekly to give them a look at what industries are impacted, where the most claims are filed, and what individuals are filing them. They have them in various demographics such as race, gender, and age. He said they have been inundated with requests for the information from all walks of government, the general public, and the press. They developed the dashboard so people could get a better understanding of the data without having to contact them directly. Another real-time data set they have is the online job postings. It gives them a look at the jobs that are being posted online and it gives the public a look by industry, occupation, and by employer. It is another real-time look at what is happening in the labor market. Some of the limitations of the job postings are that not all employers and industries use online job postings so it is an incomplete picture. It relies on the vendor to accurately align the jobs postings to industries and occupations. They always let people know that this is a good indicator of age, looking and trending over time, makes it very helpful. The second dashboard is showing Pennsylvania's economic portrait. That came a little later when they had some data on jobs that painted a good look at what is happening.

Mr. Legge then showed the Board the pre-pandemic data compared to the most recent data in June 2021. Just looking at jobs, pre-pandemic they were at 6.1 million jobs and they were currently at 5.7 million jobs. While they were slowing moving back to pre-pandemic levels, they still had a way to go. He said they actually reached a low of 4.96 million jobs back in April 2020. The labor market has improved as far as job counts go. Claims are currently at a level of 765,000. Obviously up from the pre-pandemic levels but the peak week of claims was 1.3 million. The unemployment rate of 6.9% is nothing to brag about. During the height of the pandemic the unemployment rate was 16.2%. Wages have also increased over this time period. That is in part due to the fact that employers are raising wages but also, most of those affected by the pandemic were lower wage jobs. This could be an artificial inflation of arrays in average weekly wage. They are not 100% sure what is driving the wage increase but they are sure there are multiple factors involved. Online jobs postings are starting to increase as well. He noted that the Pennsylvania profile included also added more detail to some of the items. The do that for the state and each county and workforce development area. They are updated monthly.

Mr. Legge then remarked that while there were declines in the restaurant industry and other leisure and hospitality industries, there were actually industries that benefited from the pandemic. Those industries deal in e-commerce, delivery of goods and services, and obviously grocery stores. He commented that during of the peak of the pandemic, the industries that have the highest concentration of claims were trade, transportation, and utilities, education, health services, and leisure and hospitality. Hospitality made up the bulk of the claims. He noted that leisure and hospitality fell out of the top three and as of July, the percentage of total claims has fallen below 10% . He then gave more details about each industry.

He noted that the unemployment compensation dashboard gives accounts of those people that have exhausted their benefits. From the workforce development perspective, it can help them target those that are most in need of services. They also look at exhaustees. They look at the statistics by gender, by industry, as well as race and ethnicity. The data is available for the state, each county, and each workforce development area. There is a wealth of information within that dashboard to get an idea of those people that are impacted and collecting unemployment ready to exhaust. Mr. Legge then went over their capability to produce maps or data and their capability to project an impact on various scenarios. He estimated that 46,000 jobs were either created or saved from the \$300 a week added to unemployment claims. \$4 billion of that was pumped back into the economy of Pennsylvania. Another tool that they have is to do some scenarios or impact analysis on potential economic scenarios.

Chair Brown then asked Mr. Legge if there was any way to understand how many people are discouraged from working because of the \$300. He asked if they had any estimates on the workers that it would put back in the workforce. Mr. Legge said he did not. He said that he saw studies that support the fact that the extra \$300 was keeping people from going back to the workforce but he also saw studies that said it had absolutely no impact and that it is not a driving force on whether or not people go back to the workforce. He said that he thought there were some different reasons that people were not returning. Chair Brown then asked how many workers in Pennsylvania will have exhausted their benefits by September or the end of the year. Mr. Legge said he did not have that answer readily available but that he could get it. He said that he thought a number of individuals exhausting benefits was not huge at the time but it was going to be huge at some point if there was no longer any extension.

Tim Bean then asked if they anticipated any type of requirement for those unemployed going forward to go back to where they have to go out and seek employment. He also asked if there was data on the reasons of why people were not going back to work. Mr. Legge said they did not have anything like that but they have studies going on to find out why people were not going back to work. He also said that he believed the work search requirements were back in place. Claimants were required to search for work if they are collecting unemployment benefits.

Senator Bartolotta then said that the work search requirement is back. She asked Mr. Legge if they had data from other states where they refused to extend the federal subsidy and what their unemployment rate looks like compared with Pennsylvania's unemployment rate. Mr. Legge said he did not have that information with him but he was sure they could research that information. Senator Bartolotta said that she knows at least 17 states discontinued the subsidy and a lot of those folks were going back to work. She noted that she was hearing from constituents that have businesses that they were grateful that they survived the pandemic but now their staff is getting burnout and people are staying at home so they can get the subsidy. Chair Brown said he was hearing that from businesses that they were not getting the application flow. He asked what seems to be the friction for workers going back to work. Senator Bartolotta said it seems to be a ripple effect. Mr. Legge said they have seen studies on that. It seems the \$300 and people still being tentative about going back to work because of the virus. He said there is no empirical data on it but with all the stimulus money and the extra benefits, he thinks a lot of people have paid off debt and there may be families where they do not need a second income anymore. He said he thinks there are so many factors driving it that they do not know if they will be able to nail it down to specifics. Senator Bartolotta said she was curious about the comparison. Mr. Legge said that they would look at the 17 states and compare the labor market and unemployment situation.

Representative Melissa Schusterman made a comment that daycare is not fully up. People are still waiting on some resources to get back into the job market or they are looking at a complete change of women

leaving the workforce and not willing to go back . Chair Brown asked if Mr. Legge had anything else to add. Mr. Legge said that it falls in line with the comments he had made earlier. He said that people still have childcare issues and another big issue is going to be what happens when schools starts in September. He thinks that a lot of people may be holding out and not making definite plans to go back to work until they find out whether or not their kids will be in school full-time, learning from home, or doing a hybrid schedule.

Chair Brown thanked Mr. Legge for his presentation. He asked that any follow-up be sent to the Board and that they appreciated the presentation.

Governor's Office Updates

Tara Williams than shared that in addition to the good news about Secretary Ortega and Secretary Berrier, Secretary Allison Jones recently had her baby and everyone is doing well. She is on parental leave and in the meantime, Erin Smith has stepped into the Policy Secretary role. She then introduced Eric Haggerty who is the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Governor's Office. He has oversight over the Department of Education and several other agencies related to infrastructure. His portfolio now includes the Department of Labor and Industry. She also said that after listening to Ed Legge's presentation that she echoes everything that was said. They are hearing a lot of the concerns of the various reasons why people might not be coming back to work the same way. She wanted to thank the board members who have been participating in the future work project. She thinks the work will help them understand the shared priorities. They are seeing shifts in the workforce now so the project is incredibly timely. They are now in step three of the project. She then highlighted a few relevant points focusing on the new and historic investment in education from the budget. \$460 million which included \$30 million for early childhood education with a focus on supporting access to quality education for low-income families. They also saw \$200 million added to the fair funding formula for K-12 schools. This means an increase in the amount of funds that are more equitably distributed across the state. This is accompanied by a new investment called Level Up which is \$100 million that goes to the 100 most underfunded school districts to keep working toward the goal of all schools having the resources they need. In addition to the state investment, \$350 million in federal relief funding was allocated to support school entities in addressing things like learning loss and addressing social, emotional, and mental health of students. That should be helpful in schools returning this fall. The last part is that \$50 million was allocated as an investment to the PA State System of Higher Education to support the PASSHE system redesign. In July the PASSHE Board did vote to move forward with the plan. She then noted that the Senate passed a bipartisan infrastructure support bill which was going to the house for consideration. It includes record investments in roads, highways, bridges, transit, energy, and broadband. Much of the funding is formula based but there will also be some that will be competitive. They also passed a budget resolution to craft a budget reconciliation in the big items included which are universal Pre-K, Medicare expansion, free community college, and climate investments. She then noted that at the afternoon session of the State Plan modification that it would be a great time to hear Board member's questions and thoughts on any changes to the plan for the next two years.

Agency Report- Department of Labor and Industry

Secretary Berrier noted that the summer was extremely busy for the Department of Labor and Industry. They decommissioned the old unemployment compensation legacy system in the beginning of June and debuted the modernized benefits systems. As they had anticipated, there were some glitches that occurred with the rollout, However, they were able to resolve them fairly quickly and she was happy to report that after nearly two months, they ironed out the system glitches and are focusing on system enhancements. During the past two months, they put out nearly \$2 billion in UC benefits to individuals on

traditional UC and the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation. Another major thing that occurred over the summer was an unanticipated large-scale fraud attack on the modernized benefits system. This has been a national issue. There were some fraudulent claims paid out and it gained a lot of attention. Notices were provided to individuals whose identities were stolen and also notice is being provided to employers. The fraudulent filings caused a lot of panic which is completely understandable. They are continuing to work with individuals and employers who have been the victim of identity theft along with the Treasury Department, the FBI, the Attorney General's Office, and also local law enforcement. As a result of the fraud, they worked with their vendor to implement identity verification for all initial claims filed that are filed through the modernized system. That went into effect on July 15. After the implementation, they had an 80% decrease in initial claim filings. A week after they committed to that, they also implemented identity verification for all continuing claims for the initial filings made after March 1, 2021 to ensure that they captured any fraud that may have slipped through their system measures. As a result, they still continue to experience a high volume of calls as they continue to investigate and appropriately manage the fraudulent claims. At the beginning of July, individuals were expected to begin engaging in work search activities. They are receiving reports from employers for refusal of work and are conducting investigations as a result of those. They were also preparing for the expiration of the federal unemployment pandemic benefits. They were anticipating approximately 560,000 individuals will reach a benefits cliff on September 4. The department was actively engaging the individuals anticipating outreach services so they know about PA CareerLink® services or other services offered by sister agencies.

Deputy Secretary Shelia Ireland then noted that in the briefing book, there was a fairly lengthy report on what they have been doing over the last quarter so she focused on the five specific strategic priorities that they were focused on. They are: expanding digital access, literacy and equity; leveraging the power of institutions of higher education; focusing on the apprenticeship as their flagship vehicle for reskilling and upskilling Pennsylvanians; upgrading the capacity of PA CareerLink®; and providing the tools for stakeholders, jobseekers, and employers to navigate the emerging labor market. On expanding digital access, literacy, and equity, they awarded 32 grants across the state for a total of \$1.33 million to bring in PC computing labs specifically focused on digital deserts across the state. That is in conjunction with community-based organizations as they try to figure out the new labor market, and how do they bring access, literacy, and equity into the digital space and connect them specifically to workforce development. Labs will be up and running so what they are envision is the 62 PA CareerLink® team up with the 32 public computing centers. They are also in talks with libraires to expand their digital footprint in ways that jobseekers and employers can utilize so they can effectively connect. Secondly, they finished the first phase of their project on digital literacy. They want to make an assessment of the customer base to see literacy levels to effectively connect to the virtual service that they put into place to see if staff internally can leverage those spaces as well. She said that they should keep in mind that the digital divide is still real. They are also leveraging the power of their institutes of higher education. They have awarded \$8.2 million in their near completers grant. The grant is focused on developing effective strategies to connect students and adults who are within one semester of completing a degree or certificate. The goal is to find ways to connect people to the skills that they need for opportunities that pay family sustaining wages of \$15 an hour or higher. They are also leveraging their workforce staff and are training them to utilize financial aid forms. It helps them broaden the footprint of what they are able to do. They are also focusing on apprenticeship as their flagship model. The School to Work grant was released and \$2.8 million went to 12 grantees across the Commonwealth. They will use the funds to develop partnership between schools, employers, organizations, and associations to create employment and training pathways. They would also soon see the release of \$12.5 million for the apprenticeship NGA. The specific offering will have a focus on diverse talent pipelines and underserved populations. They are trying to bring a broader footprint to

their apprenticeship network. They are also upgrading the capacity of both hard and soft skills within the PA CareerLink®. Their contract for the career advisor assessment has begun work. There are approximately 1,400 career advisors in the PA CareerLink® across the state. They are making sure that they will have the requisite skills to deal with the current level of trauma that the customers are exhibiting and they want to make sure that they have the tools they need to effectively connect them to work. The PA Rapid Hire portal for immediate placement of jobs was launched on April 16 and there has been an employer assistance forum added. It defines the services that business services teams provide. With that form they will be contacted by the local business service team within 48 hours and be engaged by the PA CareerLink® closest to them to give them the support they need. The last point is about providing tools for their stakeholders, job seekers, and employers to navigate the emerging labor market. They were pleased to announce that on August 14 the SkillUp PA platform will launch. It is a free opportunity for every job seeker in PA to connect to their virtual learning platform. They released the 2021 HPO list. The ATO has done great work on providing guides on pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeships, and toolkits to help people to navigate the system. That concluded Deputy Secretary Ireland's report.

Agency Report- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Executive Director Shannon Austin noted that they had closed the order of selection in July 2019 but they were pleased to announce the order of selection was reopened July 2021. The individuals that were on the waiting list are now being served and there is outreach by staff in order to get services throughout their various locations throughout the state. She noted that they still had the ability as an agency to put individuals into competitive integrated employment. They were able to place over 5680 individuals into employment throughout the state. They recently launched their diversity, equity, and inclusion employee resource groups throughout their agency. They currently have 134 students enrolled in training programs at the Hiram G. Andrews Center. They are also in the process of putting together a labor-management workgroup to establish and have discussions on updating things about certification, short-term training programs, and apprenticeships. They are also looking at ways to increase enrollment. In the fourth quarter of the last fiscal year from April to June, they were able to work with over 4005 students with disabilities to receive free employment transition services. They also have the ability to make referrals for the students to get work-based learning experience with employers. They also recently rolled out several provider agreements for programming within OVR. Some of it has to do with pre-employment transition services with the "My Work" initiative which is out of Pittsburgh and went to various locations throughout the state. They are also rolling out summer postsecondary experience. It allows students to get paid work experience. She then had updates with ODHH. They currently have an RFP out for a supportive employment provider for the deaf and blind. They are also heavily involved with several partnerships and statewide initiatives to ensure that walk-in vaccination clinics are accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing. This has allowed them to have interpreters on site.

Agency Report- Department of Aging

David Miles remarked that he did not have anything to report other than what was written in the update.

Agency Report- Department of Community and Economic Development

Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko noted about their WEDnet program. She said that the number one issue that they are hearing from the companies they work with is actually finding people for the jobs. In WEDnet, they do train incumbent workers to increase their skills so they are able to earn more money, move into better positions within the company and open up some entry-level positions in the company. WEDnet reported that they had a record year this past year. They were able to invest a higher percentage of all available training dollars that they had for them than they ever had before and the program was

operational for over 20 years. She noted that there are companies out there that are doing incumbent worker training and trying to move their employees up within their company.

Agency Report- Department of Corrections

Amy Schwenk commented that she appreciated the presentation from earlier and it really catches everything they have been experiencing with their population. She said they know some people are struggling not only the non-incarcerated population but the incarcerated population as well. She also appreciated the discussion surrounding females in the workforce and childcare issues. They are experiencing the same issues on their side, particularly with the female reentry population. They are just starting to reach out and gather some additional data surrounding the specifics around what some of their female reentrants are experiencing on the street. Their challenges are sometimes different. They were going to start working with the First Lady on some of those challenges. She then remarked that every quarter she touted their workforce development specialist, Dorenda Hamarlund, who continues to provide updates and pound the pavement with employers on the benefits of hiring reentrants and the skills they possess. During the pandemic, they were restricted in terms of vocational and education abilities. They continued those programs in different settings. She was happy to report that as of the meeting, all of their SCI's are officially demobilized. One of the big things that happened for them that quarter was that they were able to do a virtual reentry fair. It was a big success for them. They had about 3100 inmates participating across all 24 of their SCI's. They had about 60 employers, community partners, and Commonwealth agencies that were able to share their services and employment opportunities. They also opened and reactivated all of their reentry service offices within the SCI's which help the population connect to employers on the outside as well as receive all the documentation needed to connect to employment. They continue to partner with PennDOT successfully to get IDs to their inmates upon release if not shortly thereafter. She noted that the employment rate in the parolee population has continued to stabilize.

Agency Report- Department of Education

Erin Donohoe then presented on behalf of PDE. She noted that adult education has provided an online on-demand education program for staff. They have been available since April and so far hundreds of workforce development staff had signed up and taken the first course in the series. The next course is in development. While the first course focuses on introduction to workforce development, the second is going to focus on the PA CareerLink® system, on case management, and supporting customer needs. They are free online course modules and the link to enroll is included in the briefing book. She noted that the Perkins grant is underway again. They were welcoming Erie County Community College to the community college community. She then wanted to provide some updates as they were working on getting more educators certified to teach computer science. Those updates are in the briefing book. There was also updates from the CareerReady PA coalition.

Agency Report- Department of Agriculture

Eryn Spangler noted that PDA and L&I were working together to gather stakeholder feedback about workforce needs within agriculture. They were working to analyze the data from various listening sessions and surveys to put together a final report. The initial findings show a desire and need for more training opportunities including a focus on apprenticeship. To address the interest in apprenticeship, the Department of Agriculture recently partnered with the Apprenticeship and Training Office in hosting an agricultural apprenticeship 101 training. It focused on what sponsoring apprenticeships entails and the training was well received. The next note is on the PA Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence. The Commission has begun a diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment of the state's agricultural education system. The commission is working with a contractor who has completed an initial audit and is

now moving onto focus groups, interviews, and surveys of stakeholders within the ag system. The results of the assessment will lead to a report and action plan to address DEI within agricultural education. Regarding H2A, temporary agricultural worker programs, the Farmworker Modernization Act is a bill to revise the programming that passed the House in March and was in the Senate. The Department is in support of the act as they believe it will address critical workforce shortages as well make important reforms to the H2A program that protects essential workers in agriculture.

Agency Report- Department of Human Services

Carl Feldman said they were very excited that Act 69 of 2021 will expand the mod program to individuals who are earning a greater amount of income that they earn over time. That will take some time for them to set up but the Act's effective date is December of 2021 so that is the timeframe they are shooting for to make the benefit available to recipients at a higher income threshold. DHS continues to work on its employment and training redesign and although they can say that they do anticipate having a procurement released in the fall of 2021. The American Rescue Plan of 2021 included a 10% increase in the federal match rate for home and community-based services. The funds available from that increase match would be available until 2022. DHS went through a process of seeking input on their initial spending plan. It has been partially approved by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid services and they were working with CMS to receive full approval of the items included. In addition to that, in the American Rescue Plan, there is also a substantial investment in the childcare workforce. They were intending to release grants for the childcare workforce in September of this year. There was \$1.2 billion received for low income working families. They will have more details on the use of those funds in the near future.

Team PA Agricultural Report Presentation

Kelly Kundratic began her presentation. She noted that Team Pennsylvania is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization founded in 1997. Their mission is to improve Pennsylvania's competitiveness and economic prosperity. They work that they engage in is for the benefit of the Commonwealth that embraces their core values of nonpartisanship, collaboration, entrepreneurial, and open and transparent. All of the work they do is around the core values. As a public-private partnership, they are cochaired by the governor, whoever it is at the time, and a private sector CEO. They are also governed by public sector leadership with representation from all four caucuses of the legislature as well as select Department secretaries. The remainder of the Board is made up of private sector leadership across a number of industries in Pennsylvania and different sectors and geographies across the state. They also realized they would have benefits from input from an agricultural advisory board. It is composed of CEOs that are representative of the diversity of agriculture, the geographies and all the different sectors and industries within the larger sector. That group is currently cochaired by Secretary Reading and Scott Sechler of Bell and Evans. It provides them with a pretty solid feedback loop between private sector and public sector leadership to really know what is going on and get a feel for what is going on in the industries. The first initial charge of the advisory board five years ago was to put together an economic impact report to better understand all of what was going on in agriculture. First up was defining what it is in the state and understanding the direct, indirect, and induced economic impact of that larger sector. The report was released in January 2018. There were six overarching recommendations. The recommendations were made for policy and industry leadership. One of which was investing in workforce and education. The challenge was if there was a workforce shortage due to aging agricultural workers, changing guestworker regulations, and the shift in the skills needed to support an increasingly automated industry that may hinder productivity in long-term growth in Pennsylvania agriculture. They also identified a number of appropriate strategies. They include supporting apprenticeship and work-based learning to close the skills gap, exploring the potential of a ex-offender program to alleviate workforce shortage issues. Explore loan forgiveness for some professions within the sector. Also, increasing agricultural education and STEM related courses to

prepare the state's workforce for increased automation and diversify the business of farming education to address changing taste and business models. They also want to better understand some of the changing and evolving factors over time between 2018 and current day. They also wanted to understand the impact of COVID 19 on the agricultural sector and also the impact of the Pennsylvania Farm Bill programs that were put into effect back in 2019. The economic impact report provided some solid data to be able to ground the Pennsylvania Farm Bill programs in understanding and addressing the biggest needs of agriculture. The Farm Bill that was signed initially in 2019 has resulted in over \$50 million over three years to support agriculture in the state. She then provided a couple of facts about Pennsylvania agriculture. It supports one in every 10 jobs in Pennsylvania and seven jobs per million dollar output. They did see an increase in direct jobs between the reports. In the process of developing the report, they conducted a series of roundtable and survey questions. One of the questions was prior to the COVID crisis, what were the most significant factors impacting the success of Pennsylvania agriculture. The number one response rate by 60% of the respondents was a labor supply. It was a concern prior to the COVID crisis and then was exacerbated by the COVID crisis. A few other responses were commodity prices, environmental regulations, lack of local processors, and labor quality. The report at the time found it really important to identify some of the recovery priorities. Some of those related directly to the workforce. At the time, access to vaccines for employees and adequate PPE was high on the list of the initial survey and the report process took place in late 2020, early 2021. There is also a concern around labor supply chain assistance to develop a pipeline of talent. Something else the report did was take a snapshot in time of strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats to the agriculture sector. Pennsylvania ranks first in the country in number of young producers. 14% of all producers in Pennsylvania are age 35 and younger. The definition comes from USDA but Pennsylvania ranks first in the country for holding that. Just to put that in perspective, Lancaster County leads in that area with more than 2400 younger producers and a county in Indiana ranks which ranks second nationally has less than half that number. She then remarked that COVID only accentuated how difficult it is to attract and re-train employees in agriculture, workforce skill and supply issues, income limitation, and safety concerns. All of those make it difficult to attract and retain employees over the long-term. When they look at opportunities, the report mentions that with a shift in administration nationally, it talks a little bit about potential for new trade and immigration policies. They are still in the midst of seeing what that may look like. The growth of apprenticeship programs which they are seeing at the state level has their focus shifting on that opportunity and also in agriculture interest and investment. It is something that the Pennsylvania Farm Bill put significant dollars towards and continues to. It is a growth opportunity for increasing access with interest and investment in the state.

Finally, she talked about threats to Pennsylvania's agriculture. A sustainable workforce requires need of advanced skills due to adoption of technology. Others are wage competition, national dialogue around anti-immigration sentiments which may be threatening the availability of farms to attract the workers they need. At the end of the report, they talk about policy moving forward. Agriculture is threatened by a challenge in our workforce similar to many other sectors. The report noted that workforce development must be a priority. Ms. Kundratic then asked if anyone had any questions.

Rick Bloomingdale asked if when she talks about agricultural workers, does it include food processing or just focus on farms. Ms. Kundratic replied that it does include food processing as well as forestry. It is pretty wide definition. Mr. Bloomingdale noted that they were having issues before the pandemic. Ms. Kundratic said that some of the impacts were seen when they released the report back in 2018. She noted that they have seen that some of the challenges have only grown because of the COVID pandemic and also some other related impacts.

Committee Update- Industry Partnerships and Employer Engagement

Executive Director James Martini provided the Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee report as Dr. Ski wasn't able to be in attendance. Mr. Martini noted that the committee was engaged around the industry partnership program in PA and also focused on how to get more employers utilizing the public workforce system in PA. In order to do that, they were bringing in roundtable discussions over the next several months to hear directly from employers about what they do like about the system, what they do not, and how the system can improve. The first of those sessions is agriculture but later in the year they will be hearing from healthcare. Several other key industries would be forthcoming.

Committee Update- Career Pathways and Apprenticeship

Executive Director James Martini then provided the report for the Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee as Chair Rick Bloomingdale was on the call but unable to provide it due to travel. Mr. Martini noted that the committee was having robust discussions around their priorities. He highlighted the collaboration that the committee has with the Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO). He noted that a lot of suggestions that came from the committee as well as research undertaken on behalf of the committee by the Keystone Research Center on career pathway development were incorporated into the grant. That notice of availability was going to be out in the forthcoming weeks. Frank Sirianni asked if they were going to be doing follow-up for success rates with the program as far as if people were actually going into the fields that they were apprenticed in. How many graduates does each program have in ratio to number of apprenticeships? Mr. Martini answered that they can do some research into the data and find out.

Committee Update- Continuous Improvement

Chair Brian Funkhouser said he did not have much to add to what was already in the briefing book but he wanted to thank CWIA for their presentation. He said that if there were any other topics related to economic and labor issues that the Board would like to know more about, the committee could engage in those topics and get the information. He then noted that they were moving forward with the pilot program for the common intake project and they anticipated a spring 2022 start date. Finally, he commented that there would be a presentation on workforce system performance at the November Board meeting.

Chair Brown asked if there was a progress report on possible enhancements to technology. Chair Funkhouser said that it is tabled but it is definitely on their plate. Mr. Martini noted that they were putting together a presentation on system enhancements for an upcoming meeting.

Committee Update- Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc

Executive Director James Martini presented as Chair Yarnell was not able to attend and his proxy Zach Zobrist was not able to join the call. Mr. Martini noted that the healthcare committee continues to be focused on the ongoing crisis around the shortage of direct care and caregiving workers in the Commonwealth. As noted in the briefing book, the pandemic has really exacerbated the crisis. If anyone would like to get further involved in the discussion, they should let Mr. Martini or Deputy Director Tracey Turner know.

Committee Update- One-Stop Service Delivery System

Chair Sarah Hollister provided the report for the committee. She noted that the committee has been focused on the implementation and updates regarding the career pathway of PA CareerLink® staff. They are also investigating some customer service metrics that are used in one-stops across the country. The National Governors' Association did some research on that for the committee.

Committee Update- Reentry Ad Hoc

Co-chair Jeff Abramowitz noted that the ad hoc committee had been very busy over the last few months. They were continuing to meet on a regular basis in a joint effort with the Pennsylvania Reentry Council but still hadn't finalized their employer tip sheet. They were also working on an employee sheet that would be shared with participants that are coming back from incarceration or navigating the return of gainful employment. They were pushing employer roundtables again as they were successful before COVID. He also noted that at the last committee meeting they had talked about their priority list. Co-chair Abramowitz met with Secretary Flood from the Board of Pardons and they talked about suggestions that they could use in pushing expungement's forward. The recommendation is that they support the use of the PA Workforce Development Board landing page to promote the Reentry Employer Toolkit and hiring returning citizens. The landing page would be used as a tool to educate and simplify the process for employers to access and utilize government resources. In addition to the Federal Bonding and Work Opportunity Tax Program, the Reentry Employer Toolkit will provide other resources around services for returning citizens and employers withing with justice involved individuals. Resources would include but not limited to the Employer Tip Sheet, SHRM Getting Talen Back to Work, and PA CareerLink®. Co-chair Abramowitz said that it would essentially allow them to make resources available to thousands of employers in Pennsylvania that are looking to engage in hiring people with a criminal background to give them some guidance on the process and things they need to know.

Chair Brown said that he was looking for a motion to approve the recommendation.

MOTION: Senator Camera Bartolotta made the motion to approve the recommendation. Rick Bloomingdale seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The second area of focus for the committee has been exploring promising practices to equity in STEM education and exploring industry growth in the STEM space. They would like to look at ways in which they can promote more integration both on the education and workforce training side.

Committee Update- Youth

Chair Chekemma Townsend then provided the report for the Youth Committee. She noted that the committee is continuing to explore the impact of COVID-19 on programmer dissipation and uncovering the barriers and promising practices across the Commonwealth to mitigate disconnection rates for young people. She then noted that the recommendation that the committee was proposing was a result of consulting with local experts, and understanding and reviewing what the change might mean for local workforce boards. She noted that it is important to expand the membership of local youth committees to increase diversity and though in terms of investment strategy. It is important to uplift the youth voice. They have formed a recommendation of five additional groups or categories of members that they think the local workforce boards to consider as members of their youth committees.

Chair Brown clarified that the Youth Committee was recommending to the local boards to add people with backgrounds in these areas to better inform decisions. Chair Townsend replied in the affirmative.

Chair Brown said that he was looking for a motion to approve the recommendation.

MOTION: Sarah Hollister made the motion to approve the recommendation. Representative Melissa Schusterman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brown asked Mr. Martini if it was just a recommendation or if they could require the local boards to do it. Mr. Martini replied that all actions taken by the Board are recommendations. Any changes to state policy will go out for public comment.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Public Engagement

Mr. Martini then reviewed the purpose of the PA WIOA Combined State Plan. He noted that there are three pieces that govern what the Workforce Development Board is and why it exists. There is the federal law called the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act that was signed in 2014. There is the Pennsylvania

Workforce Development Act that was most recently amended in July 2012. However, there is a piece of pending legislation to update that Act and bring it into compliance with WIOA and it is sitting in the PA Senate. Governor Wolf also issued an executive order 2018-04 about the purpose, composition, and priority of the PA Workforce Development Board. He then remarked that the workforce development board is charged under the law to develop a combined state plan for all of the different workforce development activities that occur across several agencies and programs. They have to do that every four years. The current plan went live on July 1, 2020. Part of the law also requires them to modify the plan every two years. He noted that it was a good decision to put that in there as a lot of things have happened since the current plan took effect. The Governor is on the Board. He noted that both House and Senate members under Pennsylvania law are required to have majority and minority party members. The biggest thing about the workforce development Board is a majority of private business owners. They also require that 20% of the Board is made up of labor organizations, community based organizations, youth, and education. The rest of the Board is made up of state officials.

Mr. Martini then commented that Title I programs are for adults, Title II covers adult basic and family literacy programs, Title III is Wagner-Peyser services, and Title IV is vocational rehabilitation. PA decided to do the combined plan and recognized that there are many other people engaged in workforce development beyond those four core programs. Pennsylvania also included career and technical education programs authorized under the Perkins Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, the Jobs for Veterans, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, Community Services Block Grant out of DCED, and Reintegration of Ex-Offenders. New to the combined state plan this year is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) run by the PA Department of Human Services. He said that during the pandemic, there was a broad recognition that many of the customers of SNAP are also customers of the workforce development system. He then remarked that in Pennsylvania, they have outlined five broad goals. They are career pathways and apprenticeship, sector strategies and employer engagement, continuous improvement of the workforce development system, strengthening the one-stop service delivery system, and youth. In addition to five of the PA WDB committees that align with those goals, they also have five interagency workgroups focused on the five broad goals of the workforce system. He then expanded that career pathways is more expansive than just apprenticeship as they also speak a lot about assisting individuals with barriers that are preventing them from getting on a career pathway. Mr. Martini then noted for the sector strategies and employer engagement goal, they want to make sure that they are engagement employers and finding ways to support employer groups within targeted industries around the Commonwealth in ways that support their needs. He said that Youth is a critical charge of the plan. The earlier than they can engage with people, the less likely they are to potentially need their services down the road. He then commented on employability or soft skills and how important it is to build those. They have heard from the employer community that it is a space where investment is always helpful. He noted that continuous improvement is kind of the catchall for ways that they can make the workforce development system more responsive and provide better services to jobseekers, individuals looking to switch careers, and the employer community. Continuous improvement focuses on ways that they can look to always strive to be the best and make the necessary enhancements to the systems so they are staying ahead of the curve. Finally, he reviewed strengthening the one-stop system. There are 62 PA CareerLink® around the commonwealth. They want to make sure that people that come in for help in person or virtually; whether they are employers, workers, or jobseekers have their needs addressed. There are also three additional areas of focus within the State Plan. They are diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. There was recently an executive order from President Biden that spoke directly to DEIA issues. Access he saw as making sure that all of their locations are not only physically accessible but accessible to anybody that may want to take advantage of them, whether it be screen readers and supportive services. They were working very

closely with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Equal Employment Opportunity Office to make sure that they were doing their due diligence to make sure that everybody that wants their services can access them. The next focus was job quality and job opportunity. He said they want to provide people with the resources so they can go get a job and they don't have to go back for help. They also want to explore how to increase the usage of the public workforce development system. There are many workers that are paying for services when the PA CareerLink® in-person and online is free of charge and funded by public money. Mr. Martini then provided his contact information as well as Deputy Director Tracey Turner's. Mr. Martini commented that they had had another public session the previous Friday and they had a number of people provide them with good feedback. He noted that the entire draft of the Combined State Plan would be presented on and voted on by the PA WDB at the November meeting. It would then go out for public comment and the final plan will be voted on the Board after the public comment at the February meeting. After that it will be submitted to the federal government for their feedback.

Chair Brown commented that a lot of jobs were being sought after or placed through for-profit services that are similar to the state system. In the new plan, he asked about have they thought about how they might integrate what they have with the for-profit organizations so that they may have a wider platform. Mr. Martini clarified that he was asking about how they could potentially leverage collaboration with those organizations to engage them on their resources and take advantage of theirs. He said that he did not think that they had really talked about that but he could certainly bring it up with the interagency workgroup and see what they think.

Nancy Dischinat then remarked that she was interested in hearing on how Pennsylvania works to ensure that the workforce development system is promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. She noted that the Lehigh Valley was inventorying their board and committees in terms of diversity and having strategies to ensure their board and committees have strategies to ensure that they have representation of the diverse populations. They also have strategies to include the workforce board's nondiscrimination policy on all of their request for proposals and require that those applying supply their policy with the proposals to make sure they are looking at equity. They are also participating in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access idea initiatives. They are also doing working to ensure that the entire community is looking at the issue as a whole. Mr. Martini said that Ms. Dischinat has always been a leader in being proactive about that work. He likes hearing about their collaboration with the chamber.

Mary [inaudible] then said that when they think of access in rural parts of Pennsylvania, they think of lack of childcare options, lack of transportation, and technology access whether it be having the proper equipment or simply knowing how to use it. They asked if Mr. Martini had any thoughts on that. Mr. Martini said that the Governor and the Governor's office was prioritizing broadband access around the Commonwealth. He noted that while some people were able to transition to virtual experience relatively seamlessly, a lot of people got left behind.

Nancy Dischinat then commented that they were working a lot with their planning commission. They were helping them gather, examine, and analyze inclusion, diversity, and access. Mr. Martini said that he would love to learn more about what they were doing. He said that he loves to hear the Lehigh Valley talking about data because they can make a lot of assumptions about where they are at but it is important to have the data.

Mr. Martini then strongly encouraged people to reach out to the PA WDB staff to talk about the State Plan if they would like to.

Nancy Dischinat commented that she would like to send some comments based off of the three questions that Mr. Martini had outlined in his presentation. She said they need to plan better outreach to every citizen in the state of Pennsylvania to let them know that they have workforce programs. She said a systematic system outreach program would be fantastic for everyone. Mr. Martini said it was a crucial point. The state is really good at being reactionary with people but going out and finding people is something they can improve on.

Chair Brown asked if there was any more business before the Board. Mr. Martini said there was not.

Public Comments

There were no further public comments than those in the PA WIOA Combined State Plan discussion.

Chair Brown sought a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Representative Melissa Schusterman made the motion and Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.