

## **PA WDB Quarterly Board Meeting**

Wednesday, May 5, 2020

10:00AM to 1:12PM

Zoom

### **Meeting Minutes**

#### **Attendance**

**Members:** Chair Jeff Brown, Idayat Adewunmi, Denise Andahazy, Shannon Austin, Tim Bean, Richard Bloomingdale, Julene Champion, Rep. Morgan Cephas, Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger, Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Brian Funkhouser, Commissioner Robert Harvie, Jr. , Brad Hollabaugh, Sarah Hollister, Timothy James Peter Klein, Marguerite Kline, Rep. Ryan Mackenzie, Bob McAuliffe, Secretary Teresa Miller, Henry Nicholas, Secretary Jerry Oleksiak, Jodi Pace, Secretary Russell Redding, Gregg Riefenstahl, Secretary Pedro Rivera, JoAnne Ryan, Robert Scaer, Jessica Trybus, Dionne Wallace-Oakley, Laura Wand, Sen. Linsey Williams, Matt Yarnell, Deputy Secretary Allison Jones for Governor Tom Wolf, David Miles for Secretary Robert Torres, Amy Schwenk for Secretary John Wetzel

**Presenters:** Chair Matt Yarnell, Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee; Chair Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Youth Committee; Chair Brian Funkhouser, Continuous Improvement Committee; KayLynn Hamilton, KayLynn Hamilton Consulting; Chair Richard Bloomingdale, Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee; Executive Director James Martini, Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee; Deputy Secretary Allison Jones, Governor's Office; Secretary Jerry Oleksiak, PA Department of Labor and Industry; Dan Kuba, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration; Ruben Pachay, Bureau of Workforce Partnership Operations; Secretary Pedro Rivera, PA Department of Education; Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko, PA Department of Community and Economic Development; Secretary Teresa Miller, PA Department of Human Services; Amy Schwenk, PA Department of Corrections; David Miles, PA Department of Aging; Sara Gligora, PA Department of Agriculture; Executive Director Shannon Austin, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

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

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Jeff Brown called the Quarterly Meeting to order at 10:02AM.

#### **Chair's Updates**

Chair Brown noted that the meeting was being recorded and that it was open to the public. Chair Brown asked Mr. Martini to take the roll call. Chair Brown said that the PA Workforce Development Board is now in a different situation because they went from almost everyone was employed and low unemployment to high unemployment. He remarked that the agenda was oriented to help the state overcome its challenges.

Chair Brown announced that he was looking for a motion to approve the February 5, 2020 PA WDB meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** Mr. Matt Yarnell moved to approve the February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 minutes. Mr. Bob McAuliffe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Brown then introduced the two new Board members. Commissioner Robert Harvie, Jr. noted that this was the first board meeting he was able to attend as he had another commitment for the February Board meeting. Commissioner Harvie also remarked that he had just been elected as a Commissioner for Bucks County in November and he had been township supervisor of Falls Township in Bucks County for sixteen years previously. His regular day job was that he was a public school teacher for 26 years and for most of that he had been the Social Studies department chair at Bucks County Technical High School. He helped students decide what career they wanted to go into in that capacity. He noted that southern Bucks was more of an urban atmosphere and the northern part was more rural. Chair Brown said that he would be an excellent addition to the Board. He then introduced Laura Wand who said she was from York, Pennsylvania. She elaborated that she had recently retired from Johnson Controls where she was running the York air conditioning business. She said she had the interesting experience of having half of her team in PA and the other half was in China. She said she was looking forward to being on the Board. Chair Brown thanked her for joining the Board and noted that her experience would be wonderful.

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

Chairman Matt Yarnell gave the Healthcare Workforce Ad Hoc Committee Update. He noted that they had been working for a year and a half on a crisis statement as relating to professional care givers across the commonwealth. He noted that he thought they were at a point where they wanted to put it before the whole committee. He remarked that he wanted to share his deep gratitude for the committee's work. He noted that when they talked about the crisis statement they wanted to focus on professional caregivers which is inclusive of many workers. He wanted to note that the full impact of COVID-19 has not been realized for this workforce but that they wanted to get the crisis statement out there as they were experiencing the crisis before the global pandemic and the pandemic will only exacerbate the issue. He commented that PA had been in a crisis in the form of a shortage and that was pre-COVID. He noted that there was two factors: there was an increased demand of services and there is a difficulty to retain the individuals in the occupation. He noted that the jobs are going to grow two and a half times more than the average job prior to the pandemic but now they are going to need more the 50,000 workers by 2026. They also know that major things driving people away are low wages and lack of access to job advancement and lack of benefits. The workforce is also primarily women and women of color. He noted that the statement doesn't provide solutions but states that there is a crisis and hopes that the ad hoc committee can continue to meet to provide collective solutions to the problem. Ms. Idayat Adewunmi asked Mr. Yarnell if they had considered adding pharmacy technicians to the group. Mr. Yarnell said he couldn't remember if that group came up but that they had wanted to focus on individuals providing direct care. He noted it is something they can look at but the list they had put together was the list they wanted to move forward on. Representative Cephas asked for consideration of midwives and doulas especially since COVID-19 had more expectant mothers considering homebirth. Mr. Yarnell said they were mostly trying to focus on the workers list they had and noted that going forward they could maybe be an opportunity to discuss other groups. Deputy Secretary Allison Jones said she didn't want to preempt Secretary Oleksiak but that she wanted to flag that the Department of Labor and Industry had made available competitive money for National Emergency Dislocated Worker grant and the department submitted an application to help individuals with employment and training opportunities to get people back into the workforce. She noted the caveat was that the grant was meant

to connect individuals with roles that directly help the commonwealth's disaster recovery and humanitarian assistance. With the grant they propose setting aside about 4 million to support the direct care workforce as they have seen many cases in long term care facilities. She noted that it seemed like a good opportunity to connect the dots with ongoing and emergent challenges in the direct care workforce. She noted that the crisis statement supports the thought process and how it was put together. Chair Brown clarified that she was saying that the crisis statement helps support the cause. Deputy Secretary Jones said that she did. She noted that as people got COVID they had to isolate particularly in the long-term care setting. Mr. Yarnell said that because of the challenges in the sector, that the workers were working around the clock and were worried about getting their family sick and wondering if they wanted to continue to do the work. He also said that it is the same group of workers that were already struggling before the pandemic and that the statement doesn't cover everything but it is an important place to start the conversation. Chair Brown asked if they could include something in the statement that the Board can amend the job list from time to time to reflect the dynamics of the industry. Mr. Yarnell said that he wasn't opposed to that idea and that he didn't want to lose the focus of the group. Chair Brown asked if that would satisfy the group. Ms. Adewunmi responded that it did.

Chair Brown sought a motion to approve the statement.

**MOTION:** Mr. Yarnell moved to approve the statement. Senator Lindsey Williams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Yarnell asked to reup the ad hoc committee so that they could create recommendations about the crisis. Chair Brown said that he approved of it.

### **Committee Update- Youth**

Chekemma Townsend presented on the Youth Committee. She said that they have started to shift their focus to the new goals on the state plan that was approved at the February Board meeting. Goal 3.1 focused on promoting evidence based models and effective practices and they feel like that is important to state on the same page and approach what is an effective program and noting that all programs approach it differently. She noted that Results for America had submitted comments and the committee got a presentation from Results for America. They spent time talking about the need for increased training and technical support for a definition to become a reality. They also talked about qualitative and quantitative data that should go into policy making and funding allocations. The committee also talked about the need to engage and increase youth voice in making programs effective for them. They came to the agreement that they would endorse the definition that Results for America had created. She noted that next steps were identifying the next priorities because it is a significant collaboration. She also said they are trying to establish a work plan for the committee.

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

Chair Brian Funkhouser gave the report for the Continuous Improvement Committee. He noted that Chekemma had addressed the recommendation. He also remarked that the committee was focusing on barriers and defining those and the brand. He commented that the barriers had been put on the back burner a bit but they were once again looking at the barriers of the customers and it allows the state to examine what the customers look like so they can determine what resources need to be made available. The branding project was being looked at but there were no details yet. The issue is looking at the PA

CareerLink® and making sure they are recognizing the service and who is providing it. He said that the Continuous Improvement committee also had the presentation from Celeste Richie about the evidence of effectiveness.

Celeste Richie from Results for America then presented. She noted that she runs the workforce development portfolio for Results for America. She remarked that they are a non-profit and partner with governments so that can use data and evidence to make better decisions with funding. Ms. Richie commented that their strategies set a standard for excellence. She noted that they work all over the place and are in more than 150 cities, as well as working with state and counties. She noted that she runs the state and local workforce fellowship and there are several fellows from PA. There is a peer network of states and other people involved and there is support and 1 on 1 coaching and they have a success spotlight. She then talked about why shared evidence is important and remarked that it is important to determine if what a group is doing is effective. Ultimately, there are different parts of evidence and that all groups find themselves in different parts of the spectrum. It also provides a goal post for how to move forward. Once the definitions are adopted it allows to anchor the work and decide what the next period of learning is going to look like. She then discussed the proposed evidence definitions. She said the main point was that there was a ramp up. James Martini commented that this is the first step in the process and looking at what strong evidence is is an essential starting point. James noted that Deputy Secretary Allison Jones, Erica Mulberger, and Dillon Moore were also fellows in the program. Deputy Secretary Jones said that she is looking forward to hearing what discussion was like in the Continuous Improvement and Youth Committees about the topic and that she was grateful to Ms. Richie for presenting. She said she thinks the work is exciting because WIOA prioritizes evidence based strategies and the definition sets a high bar for where the state will want to go. It allows the state to invest its efforts the state can prove and support great workforce outcomes. She reemphasized the it is just the beginning. Ms. Fulmore-Townsend added that the Youth Committee spent a significant amount of time discussing it. She said they were optimistic about it but were also cautious at the same time. One caution they had was that by moving to a stringent level of evidence, they would be limiting the creativity of new programs. She said they spent time talking about the path to effective evaluation. They were also worried about the cost of evaluation. They also spent time talking about the need for a strong foundation to roll the recommendation out. She commented that after two meetings they felt the first step was critical to changing mindset behavior and investment levels and they were committed to learning what next steps should be to empower programs to move forward and they saw some major benefits. One is having a solid foundation across investments so there was level language. They saw it as a way of leveling the playing field for organizations to be held to the same standard. They also saw the level of technical assistance that will be required will be a benefit to programs if the state would take a position on delivery across practitioners. Mr. Funkhouser echoed what Ms. Fulmore-Townsend said and said that since there is a significant dollar amount spent on programs, it is important to have a standard of evidence of effectiveness. They also had a concern of if the definition fit for every program depending on size. Mr. Martini added that they wanted to ensure that adopting a definition meant to not crowd out the smaller programs, it would be to provide technical assistance to those programs to move them along the spectrum. Chair Brown said that he sees the recommendation as a way to create a common definition of something as good.

Chair Brown asked if anyone had comments or concerns. There were none.

Chair Brown sought a motion to approve the evidence of effectiveness definition.

**MOTION:** Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend moved to approve the evidence of effectiveness definition. Brian Funkhouser seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Chair Brown provided the update for the Reentry Ad Hoc Committee. He noted that they had been going around and hosting meetings with employers but because of the pandemic, those stopped. The committee also hired Kaylynn Hamilton of Kaylynn Hamilton Consulting. Ms. Hamilton presented on the work that she and her team had completed so far. She noted that they were contracted to survey agencies across the commonwealth to get a landscape of reentry services. They worked with the Board and committee staff and identified potential agencies to send a survey to capture information focusing on coordination and collaboration, partners services, overlap, gaps in services, and successful programs. She said they conducted two rounds of the survey and the initial was sent to 220 people and received 83 responses. Round Two invited 94 respondents and they got 40 responses. Both rounds had identical questions. She then summarized what they said. Regarding coordination and collaboration, the majority of respondents said they were working with others to provide services like PA CareerLink®, probation and parole offices, criminal justice organization. She noted that the most provided for services were workforce preparation, community related services, but there was also supportive services for clothing, housing, and basic transportation and employment placement. They also asked about the overlap by service providers. Most had said they didn't feel there was much of an overlap and they did see one, it was among supportive services but was not seen as problematic. However, there was a gap in services including funding, systemic coordination of needs, and skills gap. Transportation and housing were the most identified gap in services for reentry citizens. There were also gaps in timeliness of counseling and a more efficient and aligned system of service. The second round saw less of a gap but in the same issues. Most services collaborate with PA CareerLink® and the ones that responded no were more likely to be ones that did not provide direct service. Many appear have established partnerships that have a referral system. Some are co-located in the PA CareerLink®. Successful programs were identified but they were often not able to provide evidence of effectiveness. Respondents noted that there is no shared definition of successful outcomes so each organization has their own. Some notes were that it was difficult to track success since outcomes are not made public. They finished the data collection phase of the project by doing phone interviews where they invited 12 respondents to do a 1 hour interview and 10 agreed to it. Interviewees included local workforce development board staff, representatives from chambers of commerce, Title I and Title II, and community based organizations. Some were follow-up and others were the first time speaking. The interviewers typically saw themselves as connectors and agreed that there was not a lack of service but that accessing service was problematic. Many suggestions included warm handoffs. She said that more information would be available in the full report.

Chair Brown asked if there were any glaring opportunities from the research that they had conducted thus far. Ms. Hamilton said that they heard a lot of best practices but they did hear that the Lancaster workforce development area had promising practices and that there was some work in the county jails (Allegheny County) that was noteworthy.

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

Richard Bloomingdale presented the Career Pathways and Apprenticeship Committee update. He noted that the day before was his first committee meeting as chair and the February Board meeting was his

first quarterly meeting with the Board. He noted that they had talked about the goals that were submitted to the federal government and what they were going to do with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship. He remarked that there were overlaps with the Youth Committee. He said that Dr. Steve Herzenberg was working on a project for the committee and that they did go over the goals for the committee. James added that they wanted to put out a funding opportunity for programs to build out some career pathways programs. He said they were working on a “Chevrolet vs Cadillac” plans depending where funding is.

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

James Martini presented the Industry Partnership and Employer Engagement Committee update. Mr. Martini noted that the committee had been focused on hosting a Next Gen IP summit. He said that it would look different than what they had in mind and said they were hoping to explore virtual options but at the moment it was on hold. He remarked that the committee surveyed all of the committee’s members on priorities that they wanted to see in awareness documents of promoting the workforce system. Mr. Martini said the top ranked opportunities were shared with workforce development partners at the Department of Labor and Industry as well as the communications team. He remarked that the list was provided in the Board packet with the committee summary.

### **Governor’s Office Update**

Deputy Secretary Allison Jones presented for the Governor’s Office. She started by thanking all of the members and the general public that were a part of the meeting. She said that the last six weeks had been very challenging for the State, but that Pennsylvanians had stepped up to be a part of the solution. She said that they were working hard to make sure that Pennsylvanians knew that their government was working for them. She remarked that she would defer to the Secretary reports from the different departments. She commented that Secretary Oleksiak would be able to talk more about what they had done to scale up capacity in Unemployment Compensation. She remarked that Secretary Rivera would be able to talk about how the Department of Education had supported schools and school districts in continuity of education and that Secretary Redding could talk about the severe food distribution and food security issues that they were actively trying to resolve. Deputy Secretary Jones noted that all of the agencies had been working collaboratively and as they worked towards reopening the economy that Pennsylvanians could safely go back to work.

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

Secretary Oleksiak presented for the Department of Labor and Industry. He remarked that the Department began getting ready for the impact of the virus as soon as it became clear that there would be an impact. The Department started preparing in late February with an internal work team of what could be done. The challenge that Sec. Oleksiak gave them was what would they do if the Capitol Complex was closed the next day. He said they had two weeks to get ready. He commented that staff had been incredible doing all they can to respond to the unprecedented need that they were facing. Numbers in context: since March 15 there were 1.7million new UC claims and in the three weeks prior there were 40,000 and in the highest year of the recession (2009) there was 960,000 new UC claims. The state went from record low unemployment to record high unemployment. He said they have been able to distribute about \$4 billion in unemployment benefits since March 15<sup>th</sup>. Secretary Oleksiak remarked they were also responsible for administering parts of the federal CARES Act including the extra \$600

known as the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation and they have process 2.5 million payments for a total of about \$1.4 billion. The next phase of implementing the federal CARES act was the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and it covers people that not traditionally covered by Unemployment Compensation like independent contractors, self-employed, gig workers, etc. The system went live on April 18<sup>th</sup> and they basically had to build an independent system. So far they had accepted 150,000 applications and by the end of the next week they would be live for weekly filing and shortly thereafter would begin to receive their benefits under that program. He noted that they had done a lot in 7 short weeks as they went had been staffed and funded for traditionally low unemployment. He said that that is not all they had been doing, he noted that OVR had closed the order of selection but they have since opened a rolling process of reopening the order of selection and they did that on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Through the Safety and Labor Management Deputate, they had to move the entire of BDD (Bureau of Disability Determination), where they work with the Social Security Administration to determine eligibility for Social Security benefits, to working from home. He said they have also worked with the Department of Health on guidelines for construction workers going back to work on May 1<sup>st</sup>. SWIF also didn't miss a beat in getting medical bills paid and working with claimants. He said as an update that they had over 1,914 COVID claims under the Workers Compensation system and almost 1,273 were related for first responders.

Secretary Oleksiak said that they had been very busy in workforce. He then asked Dan Kuba and Ruben Pachay to give an update on the Displaced Workers Grant and on the Rapid Response teams working to help people adjust when their employer closes. Dan Kuba thanked the Secretary for the time to go over the National Dislocated Worker Grant. He said that once federal government and the state declared emergencies, within WIOA there is a component where they set aside a set amount of money to federal award that is available for states to submit grant opportunities to tackle issues. He said that it is the only grant that also allows areas of employment and training activities in the same arena. The National Dislocated Worker Grants that was submitted highlighted areas that were available to states. One of them was under the humanitarian area for temp jobs and allowed states to solicit and get funding to support occupations under the disaster declaration. In PA, instead of just submitting an emergency application, they decided to do more of a thorough review and approach and they were able to identify areas like the public health workforce and the direct care workforce. They submitted an application for \$21 million. They were looking at three major areas in the grant. The first is that they wanted to build a contact tracing and public health workforce so that they can make sure that they can keep up with all of the COVID cases and that was being done through the Department of Health. Approximately \$11.8 million would go to support that piece. They wanted to support the direct care workforce in the commonwealth and were working with the local workforce development boards. A lot of the money would go to support funds to hire and train dislocated workers impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic in the direct care workforce. The third component of the grant is to implement COVID-19 social distancing strategies at the PA CareerLink®. One thing that was clear is that workforce development would be changing but they needed to provide the local areas with support. They had each local area put together a post-pandemic strategic plan. Through those plans they were able to collect information about what the locals needed. One of the main concerns was security and having people that can help maintain social distancing. It was also important to have staff to support triage and having resources to help people get back into the workforce. He said that they needed to ensure that touch surfaces were being cleaned on a routine basis. They submitted the proposal to US DOL Region 2 and they were pleased with the overall product and adjusted the proposal based on the feedback they had provided. They

showcased that they have a plan in place to satisfy a bunch of large areas that are considered immediate needs. He said that it would take the federal government 3 to 5 weeks to review and provide notification of award.

Ruben Pachay then presented about Rapid Response. He noted that it is a unit within the Workforce Deputate that provides assistance to employers and workforce that are experiencing layoff or closure. It is one aspect that the Rapid Response team is heavily involved in. Pre-Covid, when the state had low unemployment, they were venturing out into layoff aversion and it is intended to help businesses maintain a healthy outcome throughout the business cycle. Their attention has now turned to meet the immediate need of a workforce that has been affected by temporary or permanent layoffs. He remarked that at the time most of the companies they were working with were in a temporary layoff. He said that some employers that were aligning their reopening plans to that of the Governor's were not taking in the full amount of staff that they had prior. He said that Rapid Response was keeping a close eye on the employees that may be affected by not returning any time soon or at all. The information that they were providing to employers was immediate access to information on how to file for unemployment compensation, how to access public assistance in their local communities, how to access food banks and other organizations that provide services when income is immediately cut. They also provide information on health care and what options are available if the employer is not continuing health care during the time that they are closed. They were providing the information online and providing the information to employers so that they could share it with their workforce. If they have a couple of days to share information with them and their employees they provide virtual meetings for the employers that are tailored to their needs and is tailored to their workforce (age, demographic, etc.). They had been actively working with 200 companies and they were continuing to expand more as the need arose. He noted that even though the PA CareerLink® were closed, they were able to virtually provide employer services. There is also the job portal and overall had been a good opportunity for employers that provide essential services to post jobs that they are hiring for and the response was overwhelming. They were trying to make sure they had the job portal updated on a daily basis. Rapid Response was looking at working on layoff aversion and being able to help employers through Rapid Response funds to expand their workforce whether it be retraining or upskilling. Secretary Oleksiak noted that since March 15<sup>th</sup> they had not stood still with the current complement of staff as they kept looking to bring people in. The Department brought back 70 retirees, they hired about 120 intake interviewers, got a lot of support from others within L&I to help with UC claims and emails, and got a lot of support from fellow agencies who provided staff to Labor and Industry. They also upgraded technology and were being very careful with it. The Department was also utilizing virtual assistance from IBM. Secretary Oleksiak stated that the Department was doing all it could to respond to the unprecedented number of claims that they received and build the system that they needed to build for people that are non-traditionally eligible. He remarked that it is important to follow the rules and regulations and stay on budget but it is as equally important to remember that there are real people at the end of the process that need help more than ever.

Secretary Oleksiak said he would be willing to open it up to questions. Representative Mackenzie thanked the Secretary and said he knew the employees of the Department of Labor and Industry were doing a lot of hard work on behalf of the people of Pennsylvania to get benefits paid out. He remarked that he wanted to talk about PUA and the federal CARES Act that had been authorized over a month ago. He mentioned that there are over 150,000 struggling Pennsylvanians that are eligible for the



program but that have not received any payment. He was hearing about their struggles every single day and the lack of benefits. He remarked that the majority of states had systems that are making payments and many were struggling with old computer systems as well. Representative Mackenzie said he spoke with the Department about three weeks ago and offered a different computer solution which other states had implemented successfully and been paying benefits for several weeks. Rep. Mackenzie said that he was rebuffed and told that the solution was going to be handled and implemented in a week or two. He said that that didn't happen and that the deadline was pushed back several times. Rep. Mackenzie asked Sec. Oleksiak how confident he was that benefits would be paid out, what the timeline was, and who is ultimately accountable for the failure. Secretary Oleksiak responded that ultimately the people of the Department of Labor and Industry are and as the Secretary, that is him, and he is fully prepared to be held accountable for the work they had done. He said that part of the delay was that they had to wait for guidelines from the federal government that they received in bits and pieces. He noted that it can't mix with the traditional funding so they had to have a separate system to work on it. They have been working with the vendor, GSI, who has been working with them on the benefits modernization program and they felt that April 18<sup>th</sup> was the day to launch the first phase of the new system. In two weeks, they created a new system. The first phase was to accept the new applications, the next phase they hoped to go live at the very latest the week after the Board meeting, and within a few days of filing, people should be receiving benefits. There are states that are ahead of PA but there are states behind PA. Secretary Oleksiak noted that they had not had some difficulties that other states with outdated systems had where they shut down their system. Secretary Oleksiak said he knows there have been delays but there have been very few glitches and when they have made changes, the system had responded effectively. The IT, the UC, and HR folks were working around the clock to keep the system going. The Department wants to give out the benefits and are not in the business of slowing things down but there are a lot federal regulations to follow and they have been able to get a few state ones waived but they are doing everything they can. He fully expects that they will be held accountable but looks forward to telling the story and when the numbers are in perspective. He is thrilled they have been able to do the work they have been able to do and understands the frustration and difficulty that many people are experiencing. Chair Brown asked Rep. Mackenzie if that answered his question. Rep. Mackenzie said that he appreciated the answer and the challenges that the Department is facing but reiterated that other states have made payments. He asked what the anticipated exact time when constituents would start receiving benefits was. Sec. Oleksiak said that the system should be functioning by the end of the week and next week they expect to be able to get benefits out the door. Chair Brown asked that in a week to ten days there would be checks in people's houses. Sec. Oleksiak responded in the affirmative and reiterated that it is for the PUA benefits and that most people typically get direct deposits. Chair Brown asked if the checks would take a bit longer than direct deposit and Sec. Oleksiak responded that that is the Treasury Department's purview. Chair Brown asked if they were three weeks behind would they get the whole amount straight up. Secretary Oleksiak said yes and that anyone facing delays would not be punished and that people would be made whole. Secretary Oleksiak also said that with the \$600 payment would be made at a separate time. Chair Brown said that he has gotten questions over the last few months and asked when the extra \$600 would end. Secretary Oleksiak said that the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance runs throughout the calendar year. Chair Brown also asked how they determine if COVID is workers comp. Secretary Oleksiak asked Deputy Secretary Scott Weiant to answer that question. Mr. Weiant said that there are two avenues in which can pursue a claim in the workers compensation system. One avenue is through the catch-all provision under

Occupational Disease under Section 108 and that applies to all other diseases and they can relate that to the occupation and if the incidence is greater they establish their claim from that. The second way is through the conventional disease injury claim under section 301 of the Worker's Comp Act and they can go in and testify if it is denied that they have rebuttal presumption that the claim was indeed related to their workplace. Most situations that they are seeing right now are a little over 1,900 claims and they can see how many denied or accepted. They said that the majority of insurers are accepting those claims. There are a small portion being denied and those cases would then go in front of a Worker's Compensation judge to adjudicate the matter and they would have two paths they could go down through to provide evidence to establish their claim under the system. Chair Brown asked if anyone had any other questions. Chair Brown thanked the Department for their work. Secretary Oleksiak thanked the chairman and said that they were responding as effectively as they could.

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

Secretary Pedro Rivera then presented for the PA Department of Education. Secretary Rivera cautioned not to follow the clickbait as relates to the Department of Education. They were planning and preparing for worst case scenario when schools open this fall. They had shared that they are planning for the best but preparing for the worst. They had created a comprehensive list of questions and answers and are constantly updating the site and go onto the Department of Education's website to access it. The first area of response they had to engage in was food security. They worked with school districts, intermediate units, and communities to ensure that everyone had access to meals. He noted that that has been an amazing partnership with PA Department of Agriculture, DHS, DCED and a number of agencies. They also worked to expediate approval of available waivers to ensure that all kids had the resources that they needed to continue education. They put in place continuous education plans and there were three to four specific areas where they were supporting schools. One was through online modules and worked with the intermediate units to provide a free online module through Odysseyware and a little over 380,000 students had signed onto that platform to help support families provide that level of instruction. They had also waived the 180 day instructional day mandate so that they could plan and prepare accordingly. They worked with modules for paper and pen blizzard packs for rural communities that might not have access to connectivity so they have some level of instruction. Through a partnership with PBS they had been making instructional content available through television. There had been a lot of work to provide early childhood programs in certain areas where there is critical staff that can't be home or have access to resources. They had been working with districts to provide differentiating instructional programs to students that might need additional support because their families are essential staff. They were working through the governor's subcommittee with their plan for opening schools and all of the considerations that need to be taken into place. The most important thing is to understand that it is not a one size fits all approach. That will be guideline for schools from early ed, K-12, and higher education institutions. They were also celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week and there was nice feature on an adult education teacher from the Altoona area and their work around helping students getting their GED. All agencies were working extremely hard to ensure that continuity of education was continuing for all ages. Chair Brown asked if anyone had any questions and there were none.

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

Deputy Secretary Carol Kilko then presented for DCED. She said they were trying to keep their businesses as healthy as they can. She noted that they had been doing a lot with manufacturers and they have a manufacturer portal and it relates to PPE and healthcare facilities that are looking for masks, ventilators, and other personal protective equipment that is needed every day. She noted that the information is on their website in their resources section. They have a Manufacturing Call to Action portal where they were trying to match manufacturers with distributors for PPE and assist manufacturers with their workforce needs. The Workforce Initiatives Director, Gwen Ross, had been working with Ruben Pachay and their website. They were also identifying manufacturers that could and were willing to pivot to meet the needs of PPE. As of the meeting, through the action portal there had been 874 submissions and they were actively working with 243 of those. Another part of that portal focused around for critical and medical supplies and that is for procurement and is surrounding medical supplies needed and they have had quite a few suppliers across the state be involved in that portal providing information about the availability of the PPE. The Business to Business (B2B) Interchange Directory is a portal where manufacturers and companies can get on and look for PPE. She then touched on some loan programs. She remarked that they set up a program for small businesses and were able to put together a \$61million pot and immediately go out under a program that existed but they had to change their forms. They were oversubscribed by about \$11 million and they were still reviewing applications and put about \$36 million on the street. They hoped to have the rest of the funding out by the middle of the next week. The CARES Act is providing funding to all the hospitals but there was a concern of how long that funding would take to get there so PA set up a loan program working with PENNVEST and it is .5% to each hospital as bridge financing and is short-term. They had been asked to start with PEMA, DOH, and DGS on a lot of programs. Another program is leveraging what PA has to get enough testing kits for phased opening of the economy. She remarked that DCED has been working on the waiver process and said that she would be more than willing to answer questions about that. Wendie DiMatteo-Holsinger said that it has been difficult as a food manufacturer and they understood PPE going to healthcare but it had become increasingly frustrating with restrictions in trying to implement temperature screening without having priorities to get those things. She said they actually had to work through other states. She said it was difficult for the food industry as they were essential. She said they were hoping that there was some way that the food industry could get some recognition as a second priority to access some of the supplies. She asked if there was anything in the future that was looking promising in that perspective. Deputy Secretary Kilko said that couldn't comment and said that she would take it to the attention of the people working on that project. Ms. DiMatteo-Holsinger said that she thought it was important for the state to hear that as it was coming other manufacturers as well and that they want to continue to go down the road of recovery for everyone but that the food industry could be in the position of not showing good results if things didn't start happening. Mr. Martini commented that Dawn Cowan from Representative Cephas's office shared a question and asked if there would be another opportunity for businesses (childcare, daycare centers, small businesses, etc. ) to apply for a waiver to open during the continued required state shutdown. Deputy Secretary Kilko said that she would have to get back to them as she hadn't been deeply involved in the waiver process so she couldn't answer that question. She said that if there are specific requests, they can send that request in to her and she can get that to the correct people to be looked at. Deputy Secretary Jones commented that the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is the state entity that regulates childcare providers and they set up a process for childcare providers to open in particular if they are serving kids and families of essential businesses and workers. She recommended that child care

providers go to the OCDEL website. She said that the website has information about the process that childcare providers can take and they had been proactive and doing early outreach to childcare providers to make sure that they know it is an option and that it is important as counties transition to yellow. Chair Brown commented that it is going to be a struggle for employers to find PPE and that it would be useful to have a portal that businesses could go to find potential vendors. Deputy Secretary Kilko mentioned that that is a function of the Business to Business Interchange Directory and that is for PPE.

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

Secretary Miller presented for the Department of Human Services. She remarked that COVID-19 had given a lot of agencies an opportunity to work together in so many more ways. She said that there was three areas that she wanted to talk about. The first was the role that the department had been playing in providing support for people to meet their basic needs. The second was the status of the workforce initiatives. The third was the challenges and opportunities they were seeing as they moved forward. Starting with the first area, many of the services that DHS provides are more critical now than ever before. She commented that they are a safety net when unforeseen circumstances occur and when people see changes in their economic status that require additional support. She noted that during their presentation at the February meeting with United Way about the benefits cliff and the ALICE project, they talked about how any bump in the road can drive a major part of the population into poverty. The pandemic and the associated economic impact is much worse than a bump and as the long-term nature of it evolves, they anticipate a continued rise in the need for services both to fill the gaps as people wait for unemployment checks and in changes in the job market. They have worked to make sure that people have coverage they need for healthcare, cash assistance, and food assistance. She said that food security has been one of their most prevalent concerns and they took a number of steps to address it. The first is that they had been granted approval to continue issuing emergency SNAP allotments each month until the public health emergency declaration is rescinded. The second is that they were planning on participating in an online grocery purchasing pilot through SNAP. Amazon, Walmart, and ShopRite would be available for online payment. They were also waiting approval of their pandemic electronic benefit transfer program (PEBT). It will assist families that are eligible for free or reduced price meals to have access to those meals while schools are closed. They also received a grant to provide EBT processing equipment to farmer's markets and they are working with farmers markets and their vendors to make them aware of that option. Gov. Wolf recently sent letters to PA's Congressional delegation and US Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, requesting greater flexibility in reconsideration in some of their waivers that were denied. They requested waivers for better SNAP access for households with college students, broader issuance of emergency payments, allowing self-attestation of documents when needed, and allowing states to exclude the new pandemic unemployment compensation from the SNAP benefit calculation. They were also in the process of establishing an emergency cash assistance program to extend support to families with low incomes. The program would be open to families with a child under the age of 18 or a woman who is pregnant. Eligible families would receive a one-time payment equal to 2 months of TANF benefits for their household size. They also intended to begin a LIHEAP crisis program to help with home energy bills but they were still waiting to hear from the federal government how much additional funding PA would receive. Regarding mental health, on April 1<sup>st</sup> in partnership with the Center for Community Resources they launched a 24/7 statewide mental health and crisis support helpline. They also know that childcare is a critical support

for working families. She remarked that she wanted to echo Deputy Secretary Jones' that their Office of Child Development and Early Learning was able to implement a waiver system to allow childcare facilities that were serving families of essential workers to continue their operations and they have a childcare map to identify open childcare locations. They hold a call each week with stakeholders and legislators to keep them apprised of the efforts of the Department of Human Services. Secretary Miller then stated that she would be moving into part two of her report which was their workforce initiatives and how they were impacted by COVID-19. She said that their Medicaid Work Supports Initiative launched in early February in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Industry, local workforce development boards, their managed care organizations, and county assistance offices. The initiative created a systematic way to connect Medicaid enrollees interested in employment to local resources and support services. While the program did run for several weeks, COVID-19 put a strain on their outreach capacity and the various components of the system shifted to respond to immediate health and safety needs as well as social distancing requirements. However, they were able to adapt the program to still ask about employment interests and to let people know that outreach would continue at a later date. Also in February they released, for applications, their Parent Pathways Initiative which is a collaboration with the Department of Education and is two generation initiative in supporting student parents in pursuing secondary education and training. Due to budget needs to address COVID-19, they had to pull back the funding and cancel the RFA but they do know that they will facing a challenging economy and importance of supports for training will become even more crucial. They were currently exploring an option to issue a needs assessment to identify alternative ways the state might support community collaboration. They reached out to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the Hope Center, and also Ascend. She noted that they were still proceeding with the redesign of their TANF employment and training programs which would be implemented July 1<sup>st</sup>. As the statewide closure was implemented, DHS provided guidance to their workforce partners in March and held follow-up calls to address immediate changes needed to their programs. On Friday May 1<sup>st</sup>, they issued a questionnaire to providers to further understand the landscape of current services and future anticipated changes for them as everyone embarks on reopening. They were also developing a multi-level plan to monitor, evaluate, and report on their redesign progress. She then stated that the last thing that she wanted to mention was their employment first work. As all systems were mobilized to focus on health and safety needs, some of the employment services and reporting were put on hold. However, as everyone thinks about supporting businesses and people returning to work, people with disabilities cannot be left behind. Several employment services were able to be offered remotely including supported employment and benefit counseling and their offices were working with providers regarding those options. Their Office of Long-Term Living was regularly sharing resources with the employment leads at the managed care organizations and their Office of Developmental Programs issued a survey to providers for feedback on innovative solutions that include not just short term plans but also how it might positively impact long-term service delivery. They were continuing to collaborate with the Employment First Oversight Commission in the implementation and evaluation of the state's three year plan including impact pre and post COVID-19. She then said that she wanted to use the rest of her time to mention the opportunities and challenges they saw going forward. As they begin to think about reopening, childcare could be a significant concern, childcare facilities are businesses and are not immune to the economic climate. Some industry experts have estimated that one in three childcare facilities will not reopen. For available childcare, the primary resource for individuals seeking certified childcare is [www.findchildcare.pa.gov](http://www.findchildcare.pa.gov) and should be used once the stay at home order is lifted. They

were reviewing data and considering stakeholder input for a plan to best direct stimulus funds from the CARES Act through the child care development fund. DHS was also partnering with Penn State Harrisburg on a study looking at the impact of COVID-19 on childcare providers and the results of that study will inform future investments and allocation of resources. Technology access is also a critical component for people to be able to participate in a remote environment. With schools going online, workplaces requiring remote work when possible and continued social distancing requirements, people who do not have access to adequate devices, broadband, or digital literacy are at risk of being left behind. Training access will also be necessary as people may be out of jobs and not returning and as new jobs and types of working emerge in response to COVID-19 so they need to think about flexibility in terms of broader access to funding as well as delivery options. She remarked that they also needed to focus on the direct care workforce and the issue has been greatly exacerbated by the pandemic. Finally, she said that they know that people may be eligible for the safety net services and many of the people that may be may not be familiar with DHS and that is one of the things that she has been concerned about is stigma in regards to their programs and the people they serve. She said they were really hoping to reimagine and rebrand DHS so that people understand that it is okay to need help and in a pandemic, people are going to need help that haven't before. They are working on redeveloping their marketing and targeting people that may not be familiar with DHS to understand the supports that they provide. Chair Brown asked if anyone had questions for Secretary Miller. Chair Brown said that it seems like they have a lot of things going on and Secretary Miller replied that they do and it is going as smoothly as she supposed it could go.

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

Amy Schwenk said that she wanted to echo the sentiment of all of the agencies working together. She said that they had been working with all of the other agencies to help their population with the continuation of vocational and educational programs inside, and religious activities and other things that they need to provide. She commented that correctional facilities don't necessarily bode well for social distancing so they have all of their own challenges that they need to focus on. Particularly for the reentry population, specifically the reprieve process that they have been going through. Secretary Wetzel worked with the Governor to try to reprieve as many inmates as possible, letting low-risk inmates that were within a few months of a release date leave and give them some population breathing room in their institutions. Reentrants on the streets are part of that vulnerable population that work in restaurants and retail so they were seeing a significant reduction in employment rates with reentrants so they were trying to connect reentrants to as many resources as they could. They were also struggling to place reentrants in places like halfway houses because disease can spread very quickly. They had really focused on home plans. Parole agents also changed the way which they are supervising. In addition to focusing on inmates, they really focused on their staff as all staff are essential employees and families often work together in institutions. They partnered with the Department of Education to develop resources that those families could utilize for their homeschooling opportunities with their children and also connecting them to childcare facilities that are open. She also said they were also focusing on supplying their employees with proper PPE. She remarked that their correctional industries had ramped up production and shifted the way they were thinking with mask production, gown production, cleaners for facilities, as well as soap. They provided all staff and inmates with several sets of masks and they worked with PEMA and the Governor's office to provide employees that might have to return to the office with masks as well. They did have positive COVID cases within two of their

facilities but they were able to maintain it and kept staff COVID positive to a minimum. Idayat Adewunmi asked if inmates got tested before they were released. Ms. Schwenk commented that they were tested prior to release.

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

Dave Miles presented for the Department of Aging. He noted that their SCSEP program, which is their employment and training program, was basically shut down as they deal with the most vulnerable citizens to COVID-19. The participants were authorized for paid sick time and were able to stay home and keep their SCSEP stipend. There are no new enrollees. They recently received \$35 million funding from the federal government to increase their spending on essential services for seniors. They will be for supportive services to help alleviate some issues with the crisis. They were working closely with the PA Council on Aging and Senator Casey's office in order to see specific areas of concern around the state to be able to help older citizens as much as possible. It is mostly in-home services and community meals that have switched to in-home meals.

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

Sara Gligora presented for the Department of Agriculture. At the Department there had been a number of issues arise affecting the agriculture workforce due to the pandemic. The first that they saw was with the H2A program. PA has guest workers that fill temporary jobs in agriculture. Last year they had nearly 2,000 H2A workers and due to the pandemic, and they had some concerns if farmers using the program would be able to get the workers that they need. Routine immigrant and non-immigrant visa services had been temporarily suspended, however H2A visas were determined to be mission critical and were being processed to the extent possible. To ensure that H2A visas could be processed, the US Department of State issued a interview waivers for possible H2A workers. If a individual was not eligible for an interview waiver, they would not be granted the H2A visa. Overall, it was only affecting a few PA farmers that they were aware of and those employers were unable to get workers because of the aforementioned ineligibility for the interview waiver. They were continuing to monitor the situation. Many of the H2A workers were housed in farm labor camps and to ensure the health and safety of the workers in the camps, PDA had provided enhanced requirements to farmers to provide housing for their workforce. There are over 360 permitted seasonal farm labor camps in PA and PDA's Bureau of Farm Safety oversees the camps. The new guidelines focused on maintaining social distancing within living quarters. The new guidance also included steps to take if a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19. Finally, the Department of Agriculture had been involved in discussions regarding the meat processing plants. PA Department of Agriculture, PA Department of Health, and PEMA had a call with meat processing plants on April 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss industry specific workforce safety. Guidance was provided to help maintain worker safety. It included daily temperature checks and symptom screening, paid sick time without penalty, increasing the frequency of cleaning, social distancing, and staggered breaks. On April 28<sup>th</sup>, the White House signed an executive order invoking the Defense Production Act to keep meat processing open and following CDC and OSHA guidance. Plants will have access to additional federal planning resources and those in compliance and following through with worker safety plans are expected to have access to additional PPE and priority testing. PA has been a national leader in demonstrating effective collaboration across DOH and PDA and would be working with DOH and L&I to support PA meat producers in developing their safety plans. PA Food Safety had been inspecting and following up on worker safety complaints for food processors and warehouses in PA. Also, agriculture

workers had been given priority testing in certain regions so workers supporting Pennsylvania's food supply chain in select areas of eastern PA would be admitted as priority for testing at the Montgomery County mass test site or the federally funded Luzerne County test site. The priority testing was available to any symptomatic adult working in agriculture or food supply who lives or works in Montgomery County or Northeast PA. H2A workers were considered eligible for priority testing as well. Chair Brown asked if it was possible to achieve social distancing in meat plants. Ms. Gligora said that it is one that they continue to discuss and they did put out guidance along with DOH and PEMA.

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

Executive Director Shannon Austin then presented for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). She remarked that OVR from the very beginning internally put together a COVID taskforce. They tried to focus on core areas like communications internally and externally so that people understood what services were available and the direction that the staff should be going. They also focused on having a continuity of service. The taskforce identified on some key things on the front end like selfcare and platforms, making sure staff was up to speed with telework. OVR's offices, the Bureau of Vocational Rehab Services and the Bureau of Blind and Visual Services continue to be in a telework status. They were still engaging with individuals on their case load and continued to serve a little over 30,000 people across the state. For Blind and Visual Services, their instructional staff were not going into the home but were continuing to do counseling and guidance via phone. They were sending out equipment and walking them through the processes like assistive technology that would benefit them. The Hiram G. Andrews Center which is the comprehensive rehab center started its summer term and they had been in the virtual status since March. The students in current programs would continue in those programs through the summer. At some point they would do a hands-on element and at that point they would hope to bring students on site with the necessary CDC measures. The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services from the beginning had been involved in PEMA, the DOH, Governor's office and the daily hearing to make sure that information is being disseminated to the deaf and hard of hearing community. They heard tremendous feedback from those across the state about their efforts. They also had collaboration with L&I communications and the DOH in developing a visual card for hospitals, first responders and others who need to communicate with the deaf and hard of hearing community for healthcare in general. They collaborated with UC to ensure that interpreters were available via video phone once a week for assistance. Labor and Industry also worked with the Governor's Office and other agencies to make sure that documents, literature, websites, presentations, etc. are accessible. She noted that OVR has had a closed Order of Selection but "they are still open for business" as they were still serving individuals. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, they had released over 5,000 individuals from the waiting list and those were individuals that had applications prior to Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Moving forward, the goal is to move to a rolling release of individuals. They also helped submit the state plan and continue to give clarifying questions on everything from measurable skill gain to pre-employment transition services. They do have one change that could impact employers and individuals with disabilities that is effective on July 1<sup>st</sup> and those that currently have a job, have a documented disability, and have immediate or job jeopardy issues, OVR will have the ability to potentially step in and serve those individuals. They would still have to go through the application process but would not be sitting on the list if they are deemed eligible for services. They also worked with several of their providers like DHS in trying to make sure that they had a state-mandated strategy that measures and addresses a lot of their providers. They also developed guidance concerning 22 of their project search sites that are employer driven to programs to establish a



protocol. They also were working with the Bureau of Special Education and National Technical Assistance Center of Transition and the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center and working through an interagency agreement hopefully to be implemented between the school year 2020 and 2021. Their hope is to better align themselves to serve those students with disabilities from 14-21 years of age that are impacted by WIOA. As of last year they had placed 7,485 individuals into employment and were currently at 83% of their goal for the year since July 2019. They were watching the numbers and the pandemic and were looking at trends and therefore how to best serve individuals. Their initial numbers was that they know there is going to be a heavy impact in the service industry where they place many individuals so they would continue to monitor that going forward. Chair Brown asked if there were any questions and there were none.

### **Public Comments**

Chair Brown then asked if there were any public comments. There were none.

Chair Brown then thanked everyone for their patience as technology is learned and remarked that he personally thought it was an informative meeting.

Chair Brown sought a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION:** Chekemma Townsend moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. McAuliffe seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 1:12pm.