



**Testimony on HB1725 (PA WinS)  
House Committee on Labor and Industry  
December 5, 2013**

*C. Russell Mayo, Ed.D., Superintendent*

Chairman Scavello, Chairman Keller, Vice-chairman Mackenzie, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss HB 1725, which is an investment in our young people known as the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Strategy Program (PA WinS). I am encouraged to see that two of Allentown's state representatives are supporting this bill, Representative Justin Simmons as Sponsor (with Vice-chairman Mackenzie) and Representative Mike Schlossberg as a co-sponsor. Joining me today is Keith Falko, Director of Instructional Initiatives for the Allentown School District (ASD). Mr. Falko is our lead administrator implementing our Graduation Initiative Grant, a grant with purposes similar to this bill. I want to recognize two partnerships also with purposes similar to this bill. First, our Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board (LVWIB), which is led by Nancy Dishinat, shares our effort to matriculate our students into careers. Finally, I want to acknowledge the leadership of Sandy Himes, Executive Director of our nationally recognized Lehigh Carbon Technical Institute (LCTI), who works closely with us in preparing our kids for careers. We are pleased to represent the Allentown School District and to bring at least one urban perspective for your consideration as you contemplate this bill.

Let me now summarize three initial thoughts and four recommendations I have concerning HB 1725 and the benefits of such a bill to our kids in the Allentown School District and to our business community.

1. This bill is timely in addressing an overwhelming business and industry need for skilled workers and in addressing the assistance needed by public school districts in preparing our kids for these jobs. Graduation rates will be affected positively by bringing a laser focus and seamless transition to these careers especially by including first-hand job access for our students;
2. This bill attracts the financial will of business and industry with tax breaks in exchange for investing in kids and their careers. The muscle of business and industry with their dire personnel needs will ensure the success of this bill;
3. I want to believe that HB1725 will do much to address two unfavorable realities of our American Culture:
  - A. First, the Bill will promote the continuing shift from societies narrow Culture of College perspective, which implies that only college really counts, to a Culture of Career Customization, which recognizes value in all careers whether or not one attends college first. Unfortunately, career focus and college are not perceived as related in our society. This long-time emphasis on college attendance established a perceived class system that discourages many students from choosing these skilled jobs. However, the

recent high unemployment among college graduates, the increasing costs of college, and the payback of college loans also favor this continuing shift in our cultural paradigm;

- B. Second, the Bill will bring a laser focus to careers and a student's future. I'm afraid most of our young people focus on their present and precious little on their future. We have to go no further than our own kids at home to recognize this truth. Educators often state that most of our young people are thinking no more than 20 minutes into the future. This Bill should help bring not only long-term focus on careers, but also real-time preparation for our students.

In Allentown, we are committed to changing these two perspectives for our kids. Our Career Counseling Centers at our high schools bring focus to careers. Our Graduation Initiative Grant funds these centers. (Your handout has information on these centers.) This Bill will help us with our efforts; and,

4. Before I finish, I wish to offer four recommendations for the committee's consideration relating to HB1725:
- A. The curriculum must include consideration of:
- i. Training in the generally accepted behaviors relating to work ethic, integrity, respect for each other, etc. – in other words, the soft skills; and,
  - ii. Development of skills identified in the 2000 SCANS Report. The acronym is Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. This was work first done in 1991 by labor and industry leaders who answered the question: What skills do we want students to have once they graduate from high school? This is the consummate catalogue of skills that students must have to be successful in careers whether or not they attend college.
- B. Major consideration should be given to middle school programs that raise awareness and give students exploratory experiences before high school, to give them both hope for staying in school and to develop early interest in these jobs;
- C. Employer tax incentives should be included in this Bill to entice employers to hire students for at least their first year of work who complete internships successfully so students have a leg up on experience; and,
- D. Employer tax incentives should be included in this Bill to entice employers to establish funds to pay tuition for students they hire to further their skills and education during their employment with the understanding that these funds may be used only for tuition for these kids.

**Again, thank you for this opportunity.**



## ASD High School College & Career Centers (CCC)

- I. Staffing for each CCC is:
  - a. 1 ASD guidance counselor;
  - b. 1 Student Success Coach /Lehigh Carbon Community College; and,
  - c. 1 CareerFORCE Counselor/LV Workforce Investment Board.
  
- II. PA Common Core Standards: There are 15 Areas within the standards; CCC is based on the Career Education and Work Standards. (See <https://www.pdesas.org/standard/PACore>);
  
- III. Staff / ASD College & Career Counselor  
Activities: Working with the students at each high school, the College & Career Counselors primary activities include assisting students in completing College searching & information gathering, college applications, college essay and scholarship essay writing, SAT/ACT registrations and preparation, scholarship searching and applications, career & future planning, creating and updating students' Career Cruising Portfolios/Resumes, and assisting with financial aid.
  
- IV. Staff / Student Success Coach /Lehigh Carbon Community College  
Activities: Working in partnership with the ASD, the LCCC Student Success Coach offers high school students a range of college preparation and enrichment activities. For example, our coach helped coordinate the fall 2013 "Your Future is Now (YFN): Preparing for College and Careers" event that enabled 300 students and family members to learn more about post secondary education and career opportunities. Our coach also sponsored six one-week afterschool career academies during which students were able to visit local businesses and meet with professionals from several industries. Other students had the opportunity to attend presentations done by the Student Success Coach about college readiness and to meet with her one-on-one about their individual interests and goals. She met one-on-one with 411 students to discuss a variety of issues mostly revolving around post-secondary education. During the past year, the Student Success Coach enrolled 55 English as Second Language (ESL) students in non-credit and credit earning departments at LCCC. One of the courses in which 14 students enrolled was an intensive ESL summer bridge program designed to strengthen reading and writing skills and to help prepare them for a post-secondary education. All interested students were welcome to apply for admission, but the Student Success Coach made an extra effort to connect with higher risk students with low GPAs, with ESL students, and with Newcomer Academy students who speak little English.
  
- V. Staff / CareerFORCE Counselor/Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board (LWWIB)  
Activities: The LWWIB sponsors the Youth Workforce Coordinator who staffs the CareerFORCE Centers at the two high schools (in the CCCs). This person works with Newcomer Academy students who speak little English to provide a variety of career development and support services ranging from identifying and applying for jobs to discussing long-term career aspirations. In addition to these successes, the Youth Workforce Coordinator has dramatically increased the level of services provided over previous years. The table below presents information on the content of these services. The number of services denotes contacts with students; contacts can range from a brief conversation to an hour-long seminar, and can be with individual students or groups. The numbers of hours are estimates of the Coordinator time devoted to each of these services. Topics indicate the content focus of the activity. Job application and acquisition skills represented about half of the effort. Other topics were included.

LVWIB Career Activity Topics, 2012-13

Topic	WIB	
	# of Services	# Hours
Job Applications	3,035	1,124
Job Acquisition Skills	3,107	771
Career Discussion	1,652	175
Employability Skills	1,643	93
Graduation/School Performance	1,580	80
Resume	79	43
Interview skills	58	23
Other	167	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,321</b>	<b>2,348</b>