

**Statement of**  
**Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association**

**PA Workforce Development Association**  
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Submitted to the  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Labor & Industry Committee

Public Hearing on HB 1725 CareerBound Bill and “PA WiNS” Legislation

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Good morning, Chairman Scavello and Members of the Labor & Industry Committee:

The PA Workforce Development Association (PWDA) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments on House Bill 1725 (CareerBound) and the "PA WiNS" draft legislation. PWDA represents the Commonwealth's local workforce investment boards (WIBs), serving as the voice of the Pennsylvania workforce investment system and clearinghouse for workforce development information statewide. PWDA develops and provides professional development training to local WIBs while continuing proactive advocacy efforts on behalf of the workforce development system.

### **House Bill 1725 - CareerBound**

The PA Workforce Development Association (PWDA) strongly supports the CareerBound legislation. The Association believes that these proposed programs would provide a strong, effective investment in the development of Pennsylvania's workforce, and help support and expand the school-to-work programs that many WIBs are currently operating.

Programs that bring increased awareness to students about viable career pathways at an early age are extremely important to prepare the workforce of the future. These programs help young people to establish educational goals that will lead to careers that are in demand and provide a sustainable living. Furthermore, when employers become actively engaged stakeholders in the educational system, labor market needs are better identified and met through innovative partnerships between educators, businesses and the workforce system.

The CareerBound bill would provide flexible funding for WIBs to expand school-to-work activities to a larger population of youth, not just those who meet the low-income eligibility requirements of the federal Workforce Investment Act. In addition, the Association believes that these school-to-work programs promoted by the CareerBound bill exemplify a type of "linked learning," which can be a motivator for students who are potential drop-outs. Importantly, many WIBs already have the infrastructure in place to expand and improve innovative school-to-work initiatives in their local area. The CareerBound legislation allows for and promotes local flexibility instead of overly prescriptive programmatic requirements.

The Association would like to see more clarification on the following points:

- What would be the measures of success? Are there specific measurable outcomes? The purpose is to attract youth to in-demand occupations, so would there be an expected increase in the number of youth entering careers or post-secondary education leading to these careers?
- Is there an expectation that this would entail working with a group of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and seeing them through their senior year? Are there any targeted ages for the pilot? Targeting middle school students is an effective strategy, but outcomes may not be available within four years because youth would not yet have graduated.

The Association offers the following suggestions in the interest of improving the bill:

- There may be some bureaucratic complications with the bill's requirement that all program partners enter into a contract with the PA Department of Labor & Industry. One Fiscal Agent (preferably the local WIB) should be the contractor and coordinate with all the program partners to facilitate this process.
- The definition in the bill of "school partners" should be broadened to include other post-secondary educational institutions such as community colleges and technical schools to ensure

that local areas are able to implement these programs with all relevant educational partners in their area.

- The bill should include language to provide technical assistance to areas that may not have as much experience with taxcredit funded programs

The CareerBound bill would be a tremendous help to the workforce system, educators and businesses in promoting viable career pathways to students at an early age. We believe this bill would increase Pennsylvania's competitiveness by strengthening the emerging workforce, and thus help the Pennsylvania economy continue to grow in the future.

## **PA WiNS (Evankovich draft legislation)**

The PA Workforce Development Association (PWDA) supports the concept of the proposed PA WiNS bill but has some concerns about how the program would be implemented and how it would align with current models for incumbent worker training that have proven to be successful in Pennsylvania. PWDA would like to see more information about this proposed legislation when the bill language is released. We offer to assist the crafters of this legislation in any way we can.

The stated purpose of this bill is to incentivize businesses to organize and collaborate around common personnel needs, regardless of industry. According to the bill summary, “employee training programs must emphasize the utilization of pre-existing infrastructure and must be focused on providing employees with skill-specific occupational training.”

We would argue that almost all of Pennsylvania’s local workforce investment boards, or WIBs, currently have industry-centric business partnership training programs in place through Pennsylvania’s successful Industry Partnership program. The leveraging of these existing industry partnerships and training materials would align well with the requirement of using “pre-existing infrastructure.”

The current model for incumbent worker training has been “shared training,” whereby multiple businesses within an industry sector pool resources to address common training needs to advance employee skills or to train in new technology. PA WiNS appears to promote a model more closely aligned to the Customized Job Training program, or WEDnet, which is geared to more generic basic skills and IT training. Businesses that fund these program will likely want training that is more specific to their industry rather than training does not necessarily align with their specific needs.

WIBs would be required to assist businesses in applying for and securing these tax credits. This may require some technical assistance to assist WIBs in understanding how tax credits work if they do not have experience with this already. There is also an issue of equity – workforce areas that do not have as many businesses located in their jurisdiction may have a more difficult time securing business interest for these programs.

Overall, Industry Partnerships have proven to be the most popular and successful model for business engagement and incumbent worker training across the country. PWDA believes that the PA WiNS program could provide an effective means to expand and support Industry Partnerships and expand the incumbent worker training they provide. As currently proposed, however, the bill does not align with this model. The Association would like to see the PA WiN concept adapted to support and strengthen the state’s existing Industry Partnership program, which is in desperate need of a sustainable funding source.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these two pieces of legislation. We welcome the opportunity to continue to provide feedback on this proposal as the legislative process moves forward.