

**Statement of**

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Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
Labor & Industry Committee**

**Public Hearing on HB 1725 CareerBound Bill**

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Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify about the CareerBound legislation that is currently being considered by the Committee.

I am here today representing two roles that I want to be clear about at the beginning of my testimony. First, I am the Executive Director of the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board and, in that capacity, oversee the operation of the public workforce system in Lancaster County in close collaboration with a private sector-led Board of Directors that represents the diversity of industry in our region. Second, I am the current Chair of the PA Workforce Development Association, and, in that role, represent the interests and concerns of the entire public workforce system in the Commonwealth.

Parenthetically, I have been a workforce practitioner for more than twelve years, making the transition from running our family wholesale distributorship for the twelve years before that.

Most of the time that I have been involved with workforce, I have also been engaged in using a sector or cluster approach in the economic and workforce development world in which I work. Ultimately, I am a sector-oriented practitioner of workforce development because it works, a fact that I believe has relevance to the legislation at hand and to other legislation being considered by the Committee.

As the Executive Director of the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board, I could agree more wholly with my colleague, Nancy Dischinat from the Lehigh Valley, and the others who have presented written testimony about the overwhelming needs to engage young people in career pathways that lead to family-sustaining jobs and which keep the talent pipeline flowing to the employers that are a part of our regional economies.

There is no doubt in my mind that the “skills gap” about which we hear from employers is very real and will no doubt get worse as companies suffer through the gradual retirement of the Baby Boom workforce. There will be a huge talent gap that threatens the competitiveness of companies in the Commonwealth in the global marketplace, which makes this an economic development as well as a workforce development issue.

The CareerBound legislation is the right legislation at the right time. I believe that all of us in the public workforce system in PA can get behind the programmatic goals of CareerBound.

In my role as Chair of the PA Workforce Development Association, however, I would like to offer some ideas about how to make the proposed legislation stronger and more adaptable to the current system.

- Career pathways depend on a broad group of partners that typically include education and others. To that end, we suggest that the definition of “school partner” (page 2, line 29) be expanded to include technical and community colleges and other institutions of higher education. This would assure the broad base of educational partners that are needed to make career pathways work.
- The collaborative arrangements suggested by the legislation are very local. They will develop with unique sets of actors and address issues that are specific to the area. Because of that, we suggest that expecting the “department” (page 7, line 2) to manage these contracts to be unworkable. A tiered approach where the Department of Labor and Industries oversees the local partnerships which, in turn,

manage the local relationships would be more compatible with the way the system works currently, keeping the focus local.

- In looking over the legislation, we do not see a set of metrics upon which decision-makers will rely to determine whether the proposed pilot program will be successful. We propose that those metrics need to be determined at the beginning of the project by the Department and in consultation with local workforce leaders.
- A few of us have had experience with tax credit-funded programs such as the Educational Improvement Tax Credit but, for the most part, the public workforce system is unaware of the requirements of such a funding mechanism. We suggest that there be some sort of technical assistance provided by the Department of Community and Economic Development for interested parties before a Request for Proposals is distributed.
- We also want to call the attention of the Committee to the idea that a tax credit-funded program tends to favor those communities that have a larger business base than others. The larger the concentration of businesses the more potential to raise donations for CareerBound programs and tax incentives for the employers.
- Finally, there is the question of equity in the disbursement of the tax credit funds that are available. It would be very easy for a larger metro with lots of employers to gobble up more than their share of the funds available. Is there any notion of an equitable distribution of the funds or will the distribution be competitively-based? It could be either way. We suggest that this be made clear to all concerned at the beginning of the project.

In general, we like the project and would be happy to provide additional feedback as it moves forward to implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to take your questions or comments at this time.