



**Pennsylvania House of Representatives Labor & Industry Committee
Subcommittee on Employment and Unemployment
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**Testimony of Jesse McCree, Chief Executive Officer
South Central PA Works (South Central Workforce Development Board)**

On behalf of SCPa Works, thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the Pennsylvania House Committee on Labor and Industry's Subcommittee on Employment and Unemployment.

SCPa Works' vision and policy directs investment in workforce preparation, skill development, education and training. These investments are targeted for and align with assisting youth, job seekers, and employers. By promoting partnerships among businesses, non-profit agencies, economic development providers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and employers, SCPa Works helps align regional resources. Through working together, all these stakeholders enhance the skills needed for workforce inclusion, employability, and educational and training levels of the current and future workforce.

SCPa Works envisions a region where the opportunity for growth and prosperity exists for all – both job seekers and businesses. To carry out the mission, SCPa Works has crafted a strategic direction to invest in the region's businesses and people in ways that are accessible, driven, and impactful. These four pillars support our vision for supporting the region's workforce:

1. **Employer Engagement** – Our work strengthens relationships with the regional business community so that our system can better understand current and projected labor demand, support-sector driven training models and invest in the development of the future workforce.
2. **Individual Investment** – We connect all job seekers (youth, adult, displaced workers, incumbent workers, etc.) to career pathways and career ladders that align education to job opportunities and lifelong learning through the PA CareerLink® system. A particular focus will be on youth services (summer employment, internships, college/career readiness, registered and pre-apprenticeship programs); and COVID-19-displaced workers (upskilling, re-skilling, short-term industry-recognized credentials).

3. **Systems Connection** - We build a productive network of business, economic development, and community partners that will create a demand driven opportunity engine for the region. Integrate education, training programs, and community partners with the needs of industry and the regional economy, including WIOA mandated and non-mandated partners. In support of the Commonwealth's five goals for workforce development, this goal will help strengthen the one-stop delivery system by having a seamless connection of partners, "No Wrong Door" for job seekers, and a singular point of contact for employers through the PA CareerLink® system.
4. **Thought Leadership** – We invest in, evaluate and advance what works in workforce development. This includes promoting the impact and value of the workforce development system and sharing trends and best practices with our community to better promote the region's growth. In support of the Commonwealth's five goals for workforce development, this goal will bolster the continuous improvement of the workforce development system by advocating for best practices and data-driven impactful programs to share across the system.

To accomplish this vision, and in accordance with federal and state regulations, SCPa Works utilizes the following core services, resources and programs:

Title I Adult/Dislocated Workers (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

Authorized under WIOA, the Adult program is for adult job seekers and workers is aimed at effective preparation and expeditious connection of work-ready individuals to open jobs, while simultaneously and through meaningful collaboration, strengthening the workforce delivery system. For dislocated workers, the program is designed to facilitate rapid reemployment, dislocated Worker programs assist workers before or after layoff in identifying basic skills training, on-the-job or customized training programs, and apprenticeship opportunities. At the point of entry, dislocated workers are triaged to identify potential program eligibility. This initial intake and triage allows for the development of a streamlined service strategy that maximizes the funding of all entities for carrying out core reemployment activities.

Title I Youth (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

Youth programming is designed to serve eligible youth and young adults through a variety of services: high-quality case management support toward educational attainment that includes career guidance and exploration, summer and/or year-round work experience opportunities such as internships and pre-apprenticeships, skills training along a career pathway for in-demand industries and occupations, and any necessary supportive services. The ultimate goal for program participants is either advancement into post-secondary education or the attainment of employment with a family-sustaining or self-sustaining wage.

Industry Partnerships and Sector Strategies

Industry Partnerships – SCPa Works helps to coordinate, convene and lead a series of industry partnerships that provide sector-based training and intermediary services to businesses. These

industry partnerships are in the following sectors: advanced manufacturing, IT and hospitality/tourism. We are also beginning to form two partnerships in healthcare and construction in partnerships with key industry associations. Employers provide a forum for SCPa Works to implement everything from incumbent worker training to the creation of training/education programs.

Regional business services teams – SCPa Works helps coordinate a regional business service team comprised of a cross-section of staff from multiple agencies that work directly with businesses. This service is a direct conduit between companies and the various workforce programs across WIOA Title that assist enterprises (such as on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, customized training, etc.).

Engage! Business calling program - Through our partnership with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), SCPa Works has received more than \$1M over the past three years to manage, coordinate and oversee a business-calling program in partnership with our economic development partners. Through this program, more than 1,200 interviews and surveys have been conducted with regional employers. The key to this program is to take this market intelligence and drive sector partnerships (IT, Manufacturing, etc.) and align employment and training services to employers' needs. SCPa Works has hardwired the Engage! program into our Regional Business Services Team (RBST) meetings, in which mandated and non-mandated PA CareerLink® partners share information about employer initiatives, needs and challenges. WIOA Title I, II, III and IV and other core program partners are all a part of developing regional strategy to respond to employer needs articulated in the sector partnerships and Engage! program.

Career Pathways for Adult and Youth: SCPa Works has worked to improve access to high quality training, recognized and in demand by our regional industry. Our goal is to upskill and prepare as many participants as possible with training and certifications. We have also created a position within our organization with a primary focus of helping companies develop and build apprenticeship programs. This staffer will be responsible for utilizing apprenticeships as an aid to developing industry partnership and cooperative training.

Rapid Response

PA CareerLink® sites have Rapid Response (RR) staff that provide early intervention business services that assist workers and employers during the entire business cycle. Rapid Response coordinates layoff aversion and outplacement services for employers and workers affected by layoffs, plant closures, or natural disasters. SCPa Works and PA CareerLink® partners recognize the importance of RR programs and services as part of a holistic approach to coordinate employer engagement, including layoff aversion; re-skilling; and placement services.

Career Pathways

SCPa Works' goal is to connect all job seekers (youth, adult, displaced workers, incumbent workers, etc.) to career pathways and career ladders that align education to job opportunities

and lifelong learning through the PA CareerLink® system. A particular focus will be on youth services (summer employment, internships, college/career readiness, registered and pre-apprenticeship programs); and COVID-19-displaced workers (upskilling, re-skilling, short-term industry-recognized credentials).

As an example of how we are building both career pathways and also helping to expand training services to those with barriers to employment, SCPa Works is partnering with a number of Adult Basic Education partners on an Integrated Education and Training (IET) program. An Integrated Education and Training (IET) model is recognized as an emerging best practice in workforce development and adult basic education. Under an IET model, participants receive simultaneous instruction in basic skills such as math, reading, or spoken English, as well as training for a special occupation or industry.

Economic Development

SCPa Works is also collaborating with the South Central Partners in Regional Economic Performance (PREP) on a business calling program (Engage!) in alignment with economic development. Through a survey tool, this program connects with businesses across the region to identify the key challenges, opportunities, and leading indicators of economic change. SCPa Works administers this program in conjunction with economic development partners from across the region, including being the single point-of-contact for any business interested in learning more about workforce development programs. This is a critical business-facing opportunity that allows SCPa Works and our partners to gather necessary market intelligence and turn that into actionable solutions for businesses.

Incumbent Worker Training

These investments strive to avert layoffs while spawning incumbent worker upskilling. To receive incumbent worker intervention dollars, a company must identify staff who lack the required skills to continue working in their job. The employer determines a particular employee/s' for imminent layoff and may apply for funding tied to the individual for direct support and upskilling dollars.

Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships

In working with the Keystone Development Partnership (KDP) and the Keystone Contractors Association, SCPa Works is creating industry-led partnerships with a view to three goals:

- 1. Expanding the number of apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs in our region by 40%;*
- 2. Ensuring that these programs are aligned to the highest priority, in-demand occupations;*

3. Ensuring that these programs (especially pre-apprenticeship programs) are aligned with other pathways that have multiple on-ramps and off-ramps if the decision to enroll in an apprenticeship program is not made.

The Hanover Apprenticeship Program, the first chamber-run apprenticeship program in Pennsylvania, was approved in 2017 by the PA Department of Labor and Industry. Through the apprenticeship program, high school students have the opportunity to begin as pre-apprentices in their junior year. The program is then structured around their high school curriculum and work hours within one of the six participating companies. Upon graduation, students have the opportunity to complete a second year as paid employees where they were pre-apprentices.

Serving those with barriers to employment

On March 30, 2021 SCPa Works hosted a roundtable with employers – “Benefits of Hiring Reentrants: An Untapped Workforce.” Over 70 employers and community partners attended the event. Lt. Gov. John Fetterman opened the meeting with praise for the reentry work being done in Pennsylvania and the need for second chances. Event attendees had the opportunity to hear from a wide range of speakers across the commonwealth. A few of the main topics discussed were:

- The economic impact of pardons and second chances in Pennsylvania
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections/Probation and Parole reentry support
- Employer perspectives and best practices for establishing a second chance hiring program
- South Central second chance programs and resources for employers
- Reentrant perspectives on successful reentry and employment

Unemployment Compensation

During COVID-19 many in our region have been temporarily or permanently displaced due to the pandemic-related disruptions in the labor market. Many of those job seekers are currently on Unemployment Compensation (UC), but the number of people who are close to exhausting their benefits is growing rapidly. A key priority in 2021 will be the outreach to these UC exhaustees (UCX). The UCX initiative is a good example of the types of linkages that SCPa Works and the PA CareerLink® one-stop system need to expand regarding partnership with UI. This is an initiative that will be prioritized through 2021 in order to better up-skill and place UC exhaustees.

The dual impact of the pandemic recession and rapid shifts in the nature of how we work have only exacerbated these challenges. The regional labor market in South Central PA was already facing a significant shortage in workers pre-pandemic – that challenge has only worsened due to the pandemic. The primary goal for SCPa Works is to identify those most impacted by COVID, invest in targeted skills training for in-demand occupations, and connect job seekers to a broader and stronger career pathway.

Our local workforce development system must build resiliency, adaptivity and evidence-based investments into everything we do. South Central PA remains an outstanding (and expanding) place to live and work – but the challenges from COVID-19, the changing nature of work, and systemic social and economic inequalities are critical issues that must be faced head on.

Workforce development services are not the only programs that help bring job seekers and businesses more opportunity for growth. SCPa Works will prioritize building and expanding our network of partners to support childcare, transportation, affordable housing, trauma-informed care and other programs.

SCPa Works is drawing on the knowledge from labor assessment projects to serve as a guide to expand current career pathways for youth and other populations that are served. Incumbent worker training, primarily in the manufacturing sector, is another key opportunity to support career pathway success. COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of crafting multiple on-ramps and off-ramps along career pathways in in-demand occupations that will provide more opportunities for growth in our region.

Thank you again to Chairwoman Klunk and the Subcommittee on Employment and Unemployment for this opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to continuing this conversation with you.