

## PA WDB Quarterly Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

11AM to 1PM

### Meeting Minutes

#### Attendance

#### Members:

- Terry Wiltrout for Chair Jeff Brown
- Deputy Chief of Staff Tori Shriver for Governor Josh Shapiro
- Secretary Akbar Hossain
- Acting Secretary Nancy Walker
- John “Ski” Sygielski
- Denise Andahazy
- Deputy Secretary Dan Kuba
- Mike Wojewodka
- James Harper Jr.
- Acting Secretary Dr. Khalid Mumin
- Deputy Secretary Hoa Pham for Secretary Val Arkoosh
- Jolene Reid
- Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook for Secretary Russell Redding
- Brian Campbell
- Tim Bean
- Sarah Hollister
- Justin Genzlinger
- Tim James
- Marguerite Kline
- Pat Eiding
- Angela Ferritto
- Dave Miles for Acting Secretary Jason Kavulich
- Commissioner Robert Harvie Jr.
- Dorenda Hamarlund for Acting Secretary Laurel Harry
- Gwen Ross for Secretary Rick Siger
- Jeff Abramowitz
- Eric Kratz for Senator Camera Bartolotta
- Gregg Riefenstahl
- Nick Centurione for Senator Amanda Cappelletti
- Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend

#### Committee Chairs:

- Chair John “Ski” Sygielski, Industry Partnership & Employer Engagement Committee
- Chair Jeff Abramowitz, Reentry Ad Hoc Committee
- Chair Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend, Youth Committee
- Denise Andahazy for Chair Brian Funkhouser, Continuous Improvement Committee
- James Martini for Chair Matt Yarnell, Healthcare Workforce Committee

**Staff:** Executive Director James Martini, Deputy Director Michelle Lengel, Dan De Lellis, Belinda Nester, Erin Donohoe, Shannon Austin

#### Chair’s Updates

Terry Wiltrout from the Washington Health System chaired the meeting on behalf of Chair Jeff Brown. Chair Wiltrout sought a motion to approve the February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.

**MOTION:** David Miles made the motion. John Sygielski seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Wiltrot made note of the bylaws that were approved by Governor Shapiro for Executive Order 2018-4. Chair Wiltrot expressed his gratitude for the board and CareerLink® in helping with recruiting and educating those in healthcare. He also shared some of the recent statistics on their workforce development.

### **New Staff Introduction**

Chair Wiltrot introduced Dan De Lellis, Belinda Nester, and Erin Donohoe as new staff members to the board. All three expressed their gratitude and excitement towards the future with the board. To finish the new staff introductions, Chair Wiltrot introduced Angela Ferritto as the new chair for the Apprenticeship and Career Development Committee. Ms. Ferritto expressed her excitement for the future with this committee.

### **Agency Official Updates**

Chair Wiltrot began by thanking Deputy Chief of Staff Tori Shriver and Secretary Akbar Hossain for joining the meeting.

- **Dr. Khalid Mumin, Acting Secretary of the PA Department of Education (PDE)**  
Acting Secretary Mumin began by introducing Dr. Kate Shaw as the new Deputy Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education and Rick Levis as PDE's Deputy Policy Director. Acting Secretary Mumin expressed his excitement at working with the new administration and emphasized that the Department of Education and the Governor's Office are on the same accord. In educator workforce, Acting Secretary Mumin emphasized that recruitment and retaining teachers is a top priority in addressing the teacher shortage. He noted that the legislators have also been working to address this through statutes which he said he will provide updates on as the work progresses. PDE also announced that career technical education schools can apply to the Department to offer a program to students interested in teaching. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, PDE announced \$1.5 million in grant funding that was awarded to 15 universities in partnerships with school districts to fast-track individuals for certification and special education teachers. In career and technical education, Acting Secretary Mumin emphasized the importance of work-based learning experiences and noted that PDE has posted guides to assist employers in serving as work-based learning sites. In regard to digital skills, Acting Secretary Mumin noted that PDE continues to work with the PA Broadband Development Authority and provides information regarding digital skills and training providers online.
- **Nancy A. Walker, Acting Secretary of the PA Department of Labor and Industry (L&I)**  
Acting Secretary Walker began by emphasizing the importance of a trained workforce and thanked the Board for their work in addressing problems in relation to the workforce. Acting Secretary Walker gave a brief update on unemployment compensation and noted that there is still a significant number of backlog complaints. To address this issue, L&I is working on adding an additional 300 people to that space. L&I is also adding UC Service Center staff to PA CareerLink® across the state and adding 35 people to southeastern Pennsylvania. L&I's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is also working to hire 30 full time help desk positions. Acting Secretary Walker stated that their goal is to alleviate the backlog by August.
- **Ryan Hyde, Executive Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

Acting Secretary Nancy Walker spoke on behalf of Mr. Hyde. Acting Secretary Walker announced that OVR had received \$13.9 million grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to focus on student youth and adults and getting them competitive, integrative wages. OVR is also focused on rapid hiring and is specifically focusing on students who are finished with their programs and in search of jobs. Acting Secretary Walker also highlighted OVR's different summer programs. In their college and state internship program they have 28 interns working across the state. In the My Works program they anticipate having 550 students participate. This summer OVR will also have their two summer academies for disabled students. Acting Secretary Walker also noted that OVR is working to apply for a Pathways Partnership and Integrative Demonstration Project grant that will aim to help underserved communities in rural and inner-city areas.

- **Dan Kuba, Deputy Secretary of Workforce Development for L&I**

Deputy Secretary Kuba began by highlighting that the Workforce Development Deputate is working with several other agencies to address workforce issues. He noted that within the budget they have requested additional dollars to help with some of their programs. For the School to Work program, they have requested \$3.5 million dollars. He also noted that there are a variety of different programs and grants funded out of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship which allows Workforce Development to provide tailored support to local areas. Deputy Secretary Kuba also emphasized the importance of the apprenticeship models. He announced that the Apprenticeship and Training Office has been able to expand to 13 people and their goal is to reach about 18-20 people. They currently have a registered apprenticeship unit, a grant and data unit, and a pre-apprenticeship unit that they are looking to expand. Deputy Secretary Kuba noted that health care workforce is a priority for L&I, and they have created nursing pathways through their apprenticeship grant opportunities to help in addressing the shortage. He also noted that broadband continues to be a major priority for the Commonwealth and the Department has created digital literacy grants to help in addressing this issue. He also noted that they will be bringing on a contractor to assess the strengths and weakness of the digital literacy grant program to help ensure that the initial investments will be approved. Also, within the apprenticeship model, they have started a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access grant aimed at the building and construction trade's recruitment and retention of individuals of minority status. They are also working with PDE to bring in a consultant to assess an apprenticeship model for teachers. Deputy Secretary Kuba also highlighted that the bureau is focusing on how they can help local areas through flexible funding and investments and improving the line of communication between the state and local workforce development boards.

- **Valerie Arkoosh, Acting Secretary of the PA Department of Human Services (DHS)**

Deputy Secretary Hoa Pham spoke on behalf of Secretary Arkoosh and sent her regrets for not being able to join the meeting. Deputy Secretary Pham highlighted the importance of affordable and safe childcare for workers across the Commonwealth and emphasized the Shapiro Administration's continual investment into childcare with workforce providers. The investment is a combination of federal and state dollars that comes to about \$1 billion for stabilization grants for childcare centers across the Commonwealth as well as for support in recruiting and retaining staff. Deputy Secretary Pham also highlighted that DHS is largely focused on ending temporary policies related to the public health emergency. They are expecting that this will impact about 1.8 million Pennsylvanians who are currently receiving SNAP benefits. They are anticipating a reinstatement of some subsection of work requirements for SNAP recipients to start on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and that about 300,000 of the adult SNAP recipients will be

subjected to these requirements. Deputy Secretary Pham also noted that the unwinding of these temporary policies will also narrow the window of SNAP eligibility for students. She stated that they are expecting these policies to end June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, but that DHS is actively pursuing options to retain eligibility for some segment of those students. DHS has also been working on strengthening their statewide partnerships and extending them through 2025. Deputy Secretary Pham also noted that DHS has made progress in alleviating the administrative burden that falls on their workforce partners. She stated that over the past year and a half, there has been a minimal increase in refugees coming into Pennsylvania and that they have an ongoing demand for adult basic education and English language learning services. Deputy Secretary Pham ended by highlighting DHS' initiatives in development for their own staff as well as their focus on increasing wages for their staff.

- **Rick Siger, Secretary of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)**  
Gwen Ross spoke on behalf of Secretary Siger and began by expressing DCED's excitement with the proposed budget. Ms. Ross noted that there is nearly \$50 million in new funding being proposed for DCED that emphasizes community and economic development investments. Regarding the Broadband Development Authority, Ms. Ross noted that the Authority has received confirmation of awards for BEAD and Digital Equity Planning grants. The Authority has also been approved for a \$200 million grant plan from the Capital Projects Fund and the application window is now open for this program through July 10<sup>th</sup>. The Authority has also executed a contract with Penn State to assist in developing bulk challenge data and a contract with Michael Baker International to assist in the development of Pennsylvania's five-year Action Plan and Digital Equity Plan per federal guidance. Ms. Ross noted that those plans are due later this year and that local town hall meetings should be coming up soon in regard to those.
- **Russell Redding, Secretary of the PA Department of Agriculture**  
Deputy Secretary Cheryl Cook spoke on behalf of Secretary Redding who could not attend the meeting. Deputy Secretary workforce is currently one of the top issues for the Department of Agriculture. She noted that there are a number of farms starting to look for transition but only about 13 percent of PA's farmers are 35 or under. She also highlighted that PA has a robust beginning farmer focus with DCED's First Industries Fund. They have also found that agriculture is expanding to many urban areas as well with Philadelphia being on the map for agricultural production. With their partnership with L&I, they have discovered that about a third of new employees in agricultural are coming from familial ties. Deputy Secretary Cook also noted that they have been very focused on apprenticeships and most recently they had a Dairy for Advantage apprenticeship. She then turned it over to Brian Campbell who is a farmer from Columbia County, Bloomsburg Borough Area. Mr. Campbell noted that his workforce is mainly H2A workers which has provided its own challenges but is really the only legal workforce system in agriculture for their use. He ended by emphasizing their dedication to continuing their work and helping other farmers succeed as changes come around.
- **Jason Kavulich, Acting Secretary of the PA Department of Aging**  
David Miles represented Acting Secretary Kavulich. Mr. Miles did not have an agency update but expressed his excitement at partnering with the Board in the future.
- **Laurel Harry, Acting Secretary of PA Department of Corrections (DOC)**  
Dorenda Hamarlund spoke on behalf of Acting Secretary Harry who could not attend the meeting. She highlighted that the department was partnering with Philadelphia Works on the Workforce Development Board to work with reentrants in the Philadelphia area. Through this partnership, they will be able to track their metrics and if it goes well, hope to replicate it with other boards across the state. The Department is continuing to focus on their vocational programs and ensure that they correlate with the employer needs

outside. Ms. Hamarlund also noted that the department has PELL, and they are working with 5-6 universities to get signed letters of understandings which should be ready to go for the January semester. Ms. Hamarlund also highlighted that the Department of Corrections has made internal changes to allow their inmates to have access to a free birth certificate. She noted that there have still been some challenges with inmates from particular areas like Puerto Rico, New York, and New Jersey. The Department now also has a MoU with PennDOT to provide photo IDs and driver's license renewals for inmates. Pat Eiding spoke regarding the reentry partnership with Philadelphia and noted that they have a need for more employers to be involved. He also noted that he was hopeful for the program to take off. Jeff Abramowitz also commented on the partnership with Philadelphia and suggested that DOC also consider opening up to community partners alongside employers. Ms. Hamarlund ended by advising the Board to look at other state laws that are dictating when and how employers should do background checks in their hiring practices and look at how that could be regulated within Pennsylvania.

### **Workforce Development Board Committee Updates**

- **Youth Committee, Chair Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend**

Chair Townsend noted that the committee continues to meet regularly to discuss ways that they can support young people through programming and working with other departments. In the last quarter, they met with OVR to get a better understanding of the options and necessary requirements in order to better promote these options. The committee is also looking to set standards when it comes to quality summer experiences for young people. Chair Townsend also noted that since their policy recommendations last year, the committee has been discussing how they wish to prioritize additional policy recommendations. She noted that the committee is looking at how they can be a better partner to the pre-apprenticeship programs as well as how they can be an advocate for young people dealing with mental health issues. Chair Townsend ended by highlighting that the committee has also been discussing the ways in which the committee can identify best practices when it comes to Gen Z workers.

- **Healthcare Workforce Committee, Chair Matt Yarnell**

James Martini gave the update on behalf of Chair Matt Yarnell and sent his regrets for not being able to attend the meeting. Mr. Martini began by highlighting that 12 recommendations have come out of the Healthcare Committee over the last five years, and they continue to be priorities. Mr. Martini noted that recruitment and retention continue to be a problem across the healthcare system and that the committee wants to work on finding ways to develop career growth opportunities particularly for employees at the entry level. He also noted that the committee is looking at how the Board can improve the quality of these jobs. Mr. Martini ended by highlighting that the committee is also looking at the specific challenges that arise with rural health and what they can do to improve the health care services in those areas. In relation to recruitment, Dorenda Hamarlund asked Mr. Martini if the board was having any conversations in relation to licensing. Deputy Chief of Staff Shriver stated that there was an executive order given to every agency to review their processes for licensing and certifications and they are currently going through that process now. Secretary Hossain also added that the analysis of these processes is happening in their new office of Transformation and Opportunity and that their goal is to work on bringing the average time down for licensing and certifications.

- **Continuous Improvement Committee, Chair Brian Funkhouser**

Denise Andahazy spoke on behalf of Chair Funkhouser and began by giving a shout-out to Erica Mulberger for her presentation that she gave to the committee on the mobile PA CareerLink®. She also noted that for those who are interested in the mobile PA CareerLink® for their workforce they should speak to Erica.

- **Industry Partnership & Employer Engagement Committee, Chair John “Ski” Sygielski**

Chair Sygielski began by drawing attention to the eight industry partnership goals listed in the book. Chair Sygielski then asked that the Board vote on the recommendations they listed and thanked Michelle Lengel and James Martini for the work they have done to support the committee.

**MOTION:** Chair Wilttrout called for a motion to accept the eight industry partnership goals. The motion was made by Pat Eiding and seconded by Chekemma Fulmore-Townsend. It passed unanimously.

- **Reentry Ad Hoc Committee, Chair Jeff Abramowitz**

Chair Abramowitz began by highlighting that the reentry committee is a joint committee with the Pennsylvania Reentry Council and that together they have multiple initiatives that will be moving forward. The committee is also moving forward with initiatives for statewide workshops on hiring reentrants and looking at the data from their investment study to help both employers and the workforce community. He also highlighted that they are currently working on employability certifications for reentrants as well as fair chance certifications for employers who are reentry friendly. Chair Abramowitz highlighted that the committee had two recommendations that they wished to vote on. The first recommendation was to extend the immunity statute to employers for providing economic opportunity to reentrants. He highlighted that in other states that have extended this statute it has provided a lot of relief for employers who have concerns about being sued because of the criminal background of their employees.

**MOTION:** Chair Wilttrout called for a motion for the recommendation for the employer immunity. The motion was made by John Sygielski and seconded by Acting Secretary Walker. It passed unanimously.

Chair Abramowitz then went on to propose the committee’s second recommendation in relation to Act 53 that reformed the criteria for occupational licensing in the state. He noted that this act targeted one of the biggest barriers for reentrants and eliminated some of the vague criteria in the licensing requirements while also requiring that the criminal convictions be directly related to the work in order to be denied. Recent regulations, however, include a rebuttal presumption in which criminal histories are taken into consideration. Chair Abramowitz stated that the committee’s second recommendation would be to go back and ask the governor to support a revisit of these new regulations. He noted that these regulations are still in the proposed stage and that they defeat the entire purpose of the Occupational Licensing Law which was supported by the Board.

**MOTION:** Chair Wilttrout called for a motion for recommendation 2 for Act 53 of the 2020 regulations. The motion was made by John Sygielski and seconded by another board member. It passed unanimously.

## **Additional Committee Comments**

James Martini highlighted that workforce is a massive priority for the Shapiro administration and as part of that, the Board has been asked to consider forming 7 additional committees. Two of the committees they have already chosen chairs for. For the committee directly related to the teacher shortage, Sarah Hollister will be chair and for the committee on apprenticeships and career and technical education, Angela Ferritto will be chair. Mr. Martini noted that there are five other potential committees that they will need board members to chair and that if anyone was interested, they should contact him. The five other committees will focus on barriers to employment, Manufacturing, Construction, Agricultural workforce, and workforce challenges for individuals with disabilities. Ms. Hollister and Ms. Ferritto both highlighted the importance of this work and their excitement at working with their new committees.

## **Public Comments**

- **Carrie Amann, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Association (PWDA)**  
Ms. Amann began by noting that the current labor market is expected to be tight for a number of years and that the association is here to continue to advocate for innovative thinking around workforce development. She noted that the association supports the Governor's budget and the Board's efforts to coordinate across state agencies. Ms. Amann highlighted that it is the local organizations that ultimately have to navigate agency rules and programming and emphasized the importance of state agencies working together on new points and training programs. Ms. Amann thanked Terry Wilttrout for his earlier comment on the work done by Amy Gatz and Southwest Corner and highlighted that Mr. Wilttrout is an employer model at the association for what works. Ms. Amann emphasized the importance of continuing to look at technological innovations and what customer service looks like. She also noted that it is important that the local boards be resourced with data to better serve their customers. She emphasized the importance of engaging local leadership and advised the board to think about opportunities that exist; particularly around reauthorization of WIOA in DC. Ms. Amann ended by expressing her excitement at working with the board and offered the board members help in finding more local partners as needed.

## **Final Remarks and Adjournment**

Chair Wilttrout ended by thanking Chair John "Ski" Sygielski for his service and hosting the board for the meeting.

**MOTION:** Pat Eiding made the motion to adjourn. Mike Wojewodka seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.