

# Delaware County Office of Workforce Development

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## Remarks for the GOP Policy Committee Hearing on Job Creation Monday, August 20, 2012 Ridley High School

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Francis J. Carey and I serve as the Executive Director of the Delaware County Office of Workforce Development and the Delaware County Workforce Investment Board.

On behalf of Delaware County Council and the Workforce Investment Board (WIB), I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this high priority issue of job creation and the role of the legislature in this arena of public policy. I also wish to thank all of the interested parties in attendance particularly our private sector employers, the real driving force in job creation.

As you have heard in testimony given to your Committee in other jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth, workforce development is a complex issue. This is the case regardless of the lens through which we examine the dynamic, be it national, statewide or local.

Previous hearings on this issue describe the important role of Local WIB's, of which there are 22 throughout the Commonwealth. They are charged by statute as the lead entity in the planning and coordination of resources to be used in providing the most favorable environment in serving the needs of the dual customer base of employers and job seekers.

WIB's are constituted by representatives of the private sector business/industry community, along with consultation among other interest groups which include economic development organizations, higher education institutions, organized labor, and other civic and governmental entities which have standing in their local communities. In sum, the dual purpose of our boards is to insure that local employers are competitive in the global market place with access to a skilled workforce and to enable citizens the opportunity to pursue career paths that will provide family sustaining jobs, recognizing the ever changing needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and workforce.

As you well know, every region of the state is a unique labor market. Delaware County is an integral member of the greater Southeast Pennsylvania region, which constitutes approximately 35% of the state's population and an equally significant percentage of the statewide workforce.

For the purposes of this meeting I will provide data specific to Delaware County. The current population of the County is **559,000**, our current workforce is **281, 660**, employment is **258,800**, and currently we are experiencing an unemployment rate of **8.1%**.

## **Demographic/Target Constituency Challenges**

- **Dislocated Workers**
  - With education and consistent work history whose skills are now outdated
  - Minimal to no computer technology skills which limit their job search abilities and marketability
  - Barriers to employment including language proficiency, disabilities, criminal backgrounds and behavioral/health issues
- **Veterans**
  - Matching the skills gained during military service with the education and competencies required to easily transfer to private sector employment
- **Other Adults**
  - In most cases, these individuals possess few if any marketable skills which make them ill-suited candidates for employment.
  - Many in this category have been long term, if not life-long recipients of some form of public assistance.
- **Older Workers**
  - Many persons in this category wish to return to the workplace but are unable to compete because of outdated skills and the inability to adapt to a changing workplace.
- **Youth**
  - Large numbers of well-educated persons which possess academic and vocational credentials which are not transferrable to private sector employment opportunities
  - A greater number of minimally educated persons with numerous barriers to employment and have virtually no skills or talents which are in demand in the current or future labor market.

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## **FOCUS ON THE FUTURE**

Considering the expanse of employers (>13,000), the Delaware County economy continues to grow both in size and diversity.

Our two One Stop or CareerLink centers are located in City of Chester and at the main campus of Delaware County Community College. They currently provide approximately 4,100 service units per month to our customers. These units of service include;

- orientation and registration,
- individualized assessment,
- workshops on various topics such as job search techniques, interviewing, budgeting/financial/credit counseling
- And in some cases referral to longer term occupational skills specific training leading to employment in high priority occupations.

The needs of the employer community for a ready-to- work skilled and credentialed workforce are ever changing. To bridge this gap, local entities must be in a continuous dialogue with all of the players in the local economy. Our WIB's provide the initial linkage to this composite of individuals and entities which are the life blood for future growth.

Depending upon one's view point, gaps exist within some of the Commonwealth's initiatives to further economic development. The critical question is not necessarily the ever growing requests made of the Legislature for additional financial resources. In my opinion, of greater importance is the maintenance of local control and flexibility in the utilization of the resources made available by both the federal and state government.

Therein lays the challenge to the Legislature to understand these dynamics and assist the current and future Administrations of state government to engage with the local leadership in creating the vision and enabling decision makers to execute on behalf of the common good.

## **CONCLUSION**

I wish to thank all of the members present and the entire House Republican Policy Committee for this opportunity to submit our observations and recommendations to the Delaware County delegation and the entire state legislature in this most important on policy issues.

