



**Testimony for September 28th House Republican Policy Committee Hearing
Lyndsay J. Grady, Director of Workforce Development
The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce**

Good afternoon, I am Lyndsay Grady, Director of Workforce Development for The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce. We are a multifaceted organization that touches nearly every aspect of our community. Our mission of attracting, growing and sustaining businesses directs all of our initiatives.

In addition to traditional Chamber services, such as networking, referrals and cost-saving programs, The Chamber is also the parent organization to a number of affiliates. These affiliates support economic development, provide small business lending services, facilitate leadership development programs and guide workforce development initiatives.

Collectively, each play a role in our organization's mission to create opportunities for the region, assist business owners and executives address the issues they face each day, and to Attract, Sustain and Grow jobs in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Since 1981, our economic development affiliates – Scranton Lackawanna Industrial Building Company (SLIBCO) and The Scranton Plan – have developed more than 1.3 million square feet, completed 9 build-to-suit projects and developed business parks totaling 3,000 acres. SLIBCO and The Scranton Plan have accomplished this by aggressively marketing Northeastern Pennsylvania, facilitating the growth and expansion of existing businesses, leading industrial development construction projects and actively participating in regional economic development initiatives.

In 2016, SLIBCO and The Scranton Plan completed 22 projects, created and retained 2,031 jobs, facilitated \$1.25 billion in community investment, completed 400 marketing outreach meetings and conducted 300 corporate tours.

As the landscape of our region's economy has changed, so have the needs of the businesses we assist in exploring Northeastern Pennsylvania as a location of choice. While infrastructure, incentives and geographic location still play a role in an organization's decision to relocate to or expand in Northeastern Pennsylvania, workforce has moved to the forefront of the conversation. Access to pipelines of talent with the right skillset, a plentiful labor supply and forward thinking training opportunities are leading the dialogue.

In an effort to proactively address these issues, The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce has refocused its workforce development efforts by closely aligning them with economic development initiatives. By dovetailing these efforts, as well as a firm understanding of what is required to grow a regional economic base, we have built the foundation for facing these challenges – but it is not one that we have the capacity to face ourselves. The following remarks reflect a few ways that The Commonwealth can assist our region as we undertake these efforts.

The largest, and perhaps the most difficult, challenge we face is sociological, such as attachment to work. Our society is severely lacking a set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence. What was once at an all-time high is now at a historic low.

The Chamber has implemented initiatives geared at addressing this challenge. One approach is by engaging our school districts. In Lackawanna County alone, our organization interfaces with 11 public schools, a Career Technology Center and 2 private high schools. Attachment to work is formed through opportunities to volunteer, job shadowing, participate in an internship, or tour a local business – just to name a few.

While we have involved our local partners in these efforts, there must be collective, well thought out policy by The Pennsylvania Department of Education and The Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry to make a sizeable impact.

Being self-aware is also critical. It is important to open new doors and deviate from past practices. Practices which previously decided what business and industry required for sustainability and growth before even asking the question.

We must actively listen to our business and industry leaders! Day in and day out these individuals are immersed in their business operations. They are the experts within their industry, knowing their challenges and opportunities more intimately than anyone else.

There is no cookie cutter solution for assisting our businesses, which is why we demand the flexibility to allow local organizations – ourselves and our partners – to assist our community. We know our economic landscape, which, in a positive light is different and unique from that of other regions. By listening to business and industry leaders, allowing flexibility for the deployment of resources and solutions at the local level and supporting these initiatives our businesses will grow and strengthen our communities.

Lastly, we strongly believe that efforts to assist underemployed individuals are crucial. While there are numerous programs and funding streams geared towards assisting unemployed individuals, there is a significant lack of assistance for those who are underemployed.

The ability to assist these individuals in growing within their business or industry and moving up the career ladder is often overlooked. This is our middle class, who generally will face the same financial and guidance needs of an unemployed individual. Yet, they do not qualify for these services.

A shift in policy and programming aimed at assisting the underemployed would allow entry-level positions to become available for those with correlating skill sets or provide individuals with the opportunity to develop an employable skill set.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide this testimony. I look forward to taking your questions.