



*Testimony of Patricia Lenahan, CWDP
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Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Human Services Committee
West Side Career and Technical Center
75 Evans Street,
Pringle, PA 18704*

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Good morning Representative Kaufer, committee members, staff, and invited guests. My name is Patti Lenahan and I am the Executive Director of Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am here on behalf of the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, Inc. and the public workforce system known as the PA CareerLink®, a proud partner of the American Job Center network.

I would like to highlight the significance of the public workforce system and how it helps citizens and businesses in our communities and across the United States of America with their workforce needs. Thousands of people walk through the PA CareerLink® centers on a weekly basis for assistance in Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties, alone. These PA CareerLink® centers are the one-stop locations for job seekers and those who face barriers to employment. In short, we empower people to avoid the welfare system by identifying their skills and interests, guiding them with “soft skills” such as resume development, interviewing, and interpersonal communications, and linking them to right-fit employers. Those of us in the workforce system generally find that those with whom we work do not want to be part of the welfare system and are looking for a hand up, not a hand out.

The L/S WIB *Vision*: Luzerne/Schuylkill Counties have a world-class competitive workforce.

The L/S WIB *Mission*: To ensure a demand-driven, world-class workforce system aligned with economic development and education.

Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1998 replacing the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) as the largest single source of federal funding for workforce development activities. WIA established a universal access system of one-stop career centers, which provide access to training and employment services for a wide range of workers, including low-income adults, low-income youth, dislocated workers and businesses. Under the federal Act, every state is required to operate a statewide system of “one stop” centers to simplify the workforce process. In Pennsylvania the one stop centers are PA CareerLink® centers.

On July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law, reauthorizing WIA for six years, from 2015 through 2020. Congress passed the Act by a wide bipartisan majority; it is the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in 15 years. WIOA opens the door to states’ greater use of sector partnerships and career pathway models, promotes higher levels of accountability and transparency, fosters regional collaboration, increases awareness and access to American Job Centers (PA CareerLink®), enhances workforce services to job seekers, unemployed and employers via workforce professionals, and makes key investments in serving disconnected youth and other vulnerable populations for successful employment through the use of proven service models.

- McCann School of Business and Technology
- Fortis Institute
- Jolie Beauty Academy
- Volunteers of America
- County Probation Offices
- Prisoner Re-entry Programs
- Pathways
- Dress for Success
- Migrant Workers Program
- SHINE After-School Programs
- Commission on Economic Opportunity
- Local Colleges and Universities
- Local Libraries
- Manufacturer's Associations
- Unemployment Services
- Worker's Compensation
- GED Services and Testing Center

WIOA helps job seekers and workers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The purpose of WIOA described in the statute includes the following:

- Increase access to and opportunities for the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need, particularly those with barriers to employment.
- Support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems, in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system.
- Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts.
- Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services.
- Increase the prosperity of workers and employers.
- Provide workforce development activities that increase employment, retention, and earnings of participants and that increase postsecondary credential attainment and as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet skill requirements of employers, and enhance productivity, and the competitiveness of our nation.

WIOA's passage and implementation builds upon the groundwork already laid by an Administration-wide review of employment, education, and training programs to ensure Federal agencies are doing everything possible to prepare ready-to-work-Americans with ready-to-be-filled jobs. That review identified several priorities for Federally supported training programs, including employer engagement; promoting work-based learning strategies, such as on-the-job training and registered apprenticeships, career pathways, and regional collaboration; increasing access to training by breaking down barriers; and data-driven program management and evaluation.

As WIOA implementation progresses, success in accomplishing the purpose of WIOA at the State, local, and regional levels, will be determined by whether:

- One-stop centers are recognized as a valuable community resource and are known for high quality, comprehensive services for customers.
- The core programs and one-stop partners provide seamless, integrated customer service.
- Program performance, labor market, and related data drive policy and strategic decisions to assist with customer choice.

There are three PA CareerLink® centers in the Luzerne/Schuylkill workforce area.

- 1) Pa CareerLink® Luzerne County at Wilkes-Barre
32 East Union St.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701
Phone: 570-822-1101
Website: www.careerlinkluzerne.org
Site Administrator: Christine Jensen
Contact: christinejensen@lswib.org

- 2) PA CareerLink Luzerne County® at Hazleton
75 North Laurel St.
Hazleton, PA 18201
Phone: 570-459-3854
Website: www.careerlinkluzerne.org
Site Administrator: Christine Jensen
Site Supervisor: Bob Pisko
Contact: rpisko@pa.gov

- 3) PA CareerLink Luzerne County® at Pottsville
201-205 East Arch St.
Pottsville, PA 17901
Phone: 570-622-5253
Website: www.careerlinkpottsville.org
Site Administrator: Sharon Angelo
Contact: sharona@careerlinkpottsville.org

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the committee regarding the goal of WIOA, the role of the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Development Board and the professional services offered at the PA CareerLink® offices, a proud partner of the American Job Center network.