



## House Majority Policy Committee Hearing

July 15, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you today. I am very appreciative of the Committee taking the time to put this event together to learn from business operators like me and how we can collectively make our local economies and Pennsylvania as a whole a better place to live, work, and raise a family. As the third generation within our family's business, I have witnessed many changes, positive and negative, on both the State and Federal level that impact how we operate our company. This morning I will outline what I deem to be the most important issues we face in moving our organization forward, post-COVID.

It is critical that all COVID-related Unemployment Benefits are ended as soon as possible. We must stop incentivizing people to stay home. Although it made sense early on during the pandemic, for far too long potential employees have received weekly payments and are making more on Unemployment than they would be working. This has created a tremendous strain on the hiring environment. In our industry the largest hurdle is CDL Drivers. They are very difficult to find and are in high demand due to there not being enough drivers to keep up with demand. Our organization turns down work on a daily basis because we can't hire drivers fast enough to meet capacity. For far too long we as a society have looked down on the trades as a way to make a living, and now we are paying for it. College isn't for everyone. We must do a better job of promoting the trades and the technical schools much earlier in the education process. These schools churn out graduates in these very necessary and high demand careers. To continue to promote colleges and universities, and the debt that comes along with a degree, would be a mistake and would not help get more workers where they are needed most. When is the last time any of us saw fast food chains offering \$1,000 signing bonuses and \$12-\$14/hour to attract & retain employees? Although \$15 minimum wage is not reasonable in my opinion, an increase is necessary. There has to be a compromise where everyone benefits, and the end user doesn't suffer due to rising prices for the goods & services they are paying for. It is my sincere hope that we have all learned from the Pandemic and the mistakes we made throughout. Let's get everyone back to work so they can pump that hard-earned money back into the local economies. We cannot continue to rely on the Government's assistance and expect a thriving economy. We do that by getting those unemployed back to work and attracting higher paying jobs to the State so those same individuals can invest in their future and work towards a better lifestyle.

Attracting additional Manufacturing, Supply Chain, and Distribution channel companies to the Commonwealth not only means more of the higher paying jobs needed for our communities, but also improves the supply & distribution of the raw materials hurdles we are currently facing. Much is needed to be done to lower the skyrocketing prices of materials and products consumers need for their homes and businesses. Attracting large



companies who would set up shop within our local regions and bring with them thousands of jobs would be extremely beneficial to the overall process and assist in reducing order lead times, increasing assembly line inventories, and put and keep products on the shelves on time and as needed. This ultimately saves consumers money, which they in turn put back into their local economies.

Government Spending & Budget Oversight is another curtail to growing Pennsylvania. Specifically, I would like to reference Motor Fuels Excise Taxes & Infrastructure, more commonly referred to as PA Liquid Fuels Taxes. As you know, Pennsylvania is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest taxed State in the Country when it comes to Gasoline and Diesel Fuel excise taxes (\$.576/gallon and \$.741/gallon respectively). As you also know, these dollars are to be used to improve our Commonwealth's infrastructure. Yet we continuously hear how PA does not have adequate infrastructure funding and several other options are being discussed and proposed to generate additional funds. Which begs the question, where are these monies going? With all due respect, tolling bridges and interstates throughout the Commonwealth is not the answer. More accountability and budgeting controls are in order. We certainly do not need additional fees and taxes assessed to Pennsylvanians.

Regarding the environment, Pennsylvania's Natural Resources and Fossil Fuels must be viewed as assets and opportunities for job growth, not viewed as the enemy. These industries are the backbone of the Commonwealth, and quite frankly the US for that matter. Not long ago we were Energy Independent as a Country and Pennsylvania was a very large part of that accomplishment. Sadly, since "Day 1" that is quickly fading away, and we are witnessing relentless attacks on our natural resources and fossil fuels. Instead of embracing these God Given assets, the push is to convert to electric, most aggressively, electric vehicles & charging stations. Many of us are all for alternatives. However, what are we going to do when the already failing power grid infrastructure cannot keep up? What happens when there is not enough energy production? Has anyone asked how power is generated in the first place and what happens if coal, natural gas, and diesel fuel all go away? These are serious concerns and from my standpoint we have the cart way ahead of the horse. We can protect and care for our climate and environment without completely shutting down some of the highest paid and largest representation of workers in the State. Let's get reasonable and use more common sense when making these significant changes to how we all live and operate.

Revitalization & Tourism Efforts are also a significant source of growing the economy and the Commonwealth overall. State Funding to projects that drive Economic Development are critical in helping especially smaller communities with lower budgets a real opportunity for growth. We must continue to identify under-utilized areas of the Commonwealth and assist with Grants and low interest loans to help drive capital improvements. Post-pandemic, we must also reposition commercial real estate and office space that is no longer being utilized as they once were. Many business owners are forced to creatively restructuring their organizations from in-person to digital/virtual.

These changes are not free, and in some cases mean survival. Collaborations between business owners, residents, and Government is vital to the forward moving economic recovery. It's up to all of us to make a difference.



I wish to again thank the Committee for allowing me this opportunity today. I truly hope we all walk away from today's hearing with additional insight as to how we can continue to grow Pennsylvania and offer its residents a more robust place to call home. Thank you.