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PA House of Representatives  
Republican Policy Committee

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414, Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
(717) 260-6144

**Rep. Joshua D. Kail**  
Chairman

**PA House Republican Policy Committee Hearing**  
**“Manufacturing Momentum: Assembling PA’s Workforce”**

**September 27, 2024, at 10 a.m.**

**Lehigh Heavy Forge Corporation**  
**275 Emery St**  
**Bethlehem, PA 18015**

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance
- 10:10 a.m. **Michael Druckenmiller**  
*Vice President, Lehigh Heavy Forge*
- 10:15 a.m. **Blair Woodring**  
*Director of Business Development, Precision Custom Components*
- 10:20 a.m. **Nancy Dischinat**  
*Executive Director, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley*
- 10:25 a.m. **John Rhatigan**  
*Chairman, Marine Machinery Association*
- 10:30 a.m. **Questions for the Testifiers**
- 11:00 a.m. **Closing Comments**



## Testifier Biographies

### PA House of Representatives Policy Committee Hearing *“Manufacturing Momentum: Assembling PA’s Workforce”*



#### **Michael Druckenmiller** **Vice President, Lehigh Heavy Forge**

Michael Druckenmiller is the Vice President of Lehigh Heavy Forge, where he has contributed nearly a decade of expertise, starting as a Senior Sales Engineer. With a diverse professional background, Michael has held roles as a combat engineer in the U.S. Army Reserves, a research and development leader for Minerals Technologies, Inc., and a development engineer and manager of strategic initiatives for FLSmidth, Inc. He has also managed business development and special projects for Inergies and Crusher Vision, Inc.

Michael’s passion for community involvement is evident through his volunteer work, including serving as president of a home and school executive committee and coaching youth football, wrestling, and baseball. He also served as vice president and executive director of public relations for the Lehigh Township Athletic Association.

Michael holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh, has completed graduate-level studies in Analytical Chemistry at Lehigh University, and earned a certificate in Entrepreneurial Leadership from the Danish Technical University’s Executive School of Business.

#### **Blair Woodring** **Director of Business Development, Precision Custom Components**



Blair Woodring brings a wealth of experience in business development and sales across a range of industries. Currently serving as Director of Business Development at Precision Custom Components, LLC, Blair has held key leadership roles at prominent companies including Lenape Forged Products Corporation, Custom Alloy Corporation, and DuBose National Energy Systems.

His expertise spans strategic planning, customer relationship management, and supply chain development, with additional responsibilities in ITAR compliance, CMMC, and cybersecurity implementation.

Blair holds a Master of Business Administration with a focus on Operations Management (Industrial Engineering) from Loyola University Chicago, and a Bachelor of Arts in International Business, with a Minor in History, from Ohio Wesleyan University.



#### **Nancy Dischinat** **Executive Director, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley**

Nancy Dischinat is the Executive Director of the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV). Nancy works to align workforce development with economic development, education, community planning, government, and business and industry. This strategy results in a universal understanding of the workforce, employability and skills gaps, education and training requirements for business and industry’s career pathways, and employment opportunities.

## **Nancy Dischinat**

### **Executive Director, Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (cont.)**

Under Nancy's leadership, the PA CareerLink® Lehigh Valley Workforce System governed by the WBLV enhanced its centrally-located comprehensive workforce center and opened satellite offices throughout the Lehigh Valley. She oversees and maintains a One-Stop Workforce System comprised of the Lehigh and Northampton County Executives, serving as Chief Elected Officials, in collaboration with 21 One-Stop Partners designated under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To align workforce development, economic development, education, and business and industry, she builds relationships with federal, state and local policymakers, and regional partners in the PA Department of Labor and Industry's Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations, Bureau of Workforce Development Administration, Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Education and Training Institutions, and Government.

Nancy works with award-winning, employer-led Apprenticeship Consortia; labor management organizations are represented on the Workforce Board. She ensures that business and industry, One-Stop Partners, and community stakeholders provide input for the WBLV Strategic Plan, and establishes working relationships with Federal, State and Local policymakers including U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Commerce, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, and Federal Reserve of Philadelphia, to name a few.

Nancy presents and collaborates with the PA Workforce Development Association, National Association of Workforce Boards and U.S. Conference of Mayors. To increase career opportunities for youth, the WBLV provides access to jobs, part-time and summer employment, work experiences, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, training opportunities, and has initiated Job Fairs for high school students showcasing jobs, jobs, jobs!

## **John Rhatigan**

### **Chairman, Marine Machinery Association**

John Rhatigan is a seasoned professional with extensive experience in the marine and defense industries, currently serving as the Chairman of The Marine Machinery Association. He is also the owner of Rhatigan Professional Services and he serves on the Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM) Executive Committee.

Throughout his career, John has focused on executive management, leadership development, and strategic execution. His previous roles include serving on the Industry Partners Board of Directors for the Shipbuilders Council of America, as Vice President of Engineering and Operations for Ferguson Perforating, and as Vice President of Product Development and Engineering for The Entwistle Company. He also served as Production Manager at Bath Iron Works and as a Senior Engineer at Newport News Shipbuilding.

John holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering Systems from the United States Merchant Marine Academy and a Master of Science in Engineering Administration from The George Washington University School of Business. He also attended the Worcester Polytechnic Institute for Mechanical Engineering and Massachusetts Institute of Technology for Marketing and Sales.





**LEHIGH HEAVY FORGE**

Precision Forgings to Shape the Future

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Workforce Development Hearing**

**Michael J. Druckenmiller – Vice President, Lehigh Heavy Forge**

Good morning everyone. My name is Mike Druckenmiller and I am the Vice President at Lehigh Heavy Forge. I have been with LHF for over 9 years and prior to working in the Steel Industry I spent 8 years in the Mining Industry, 8 years in the Glass Industry and 6 years in the Paper Industry. All of my 30+ years have been spent in Heavy Industry with a focus on having a strong, dedicated work force to successfully support and guide production.

The history of Lehigh Heavy Forge dates back to 1887 as the Bethlehem Iron Company with the birth of the Forging Industry in the US. Our predecessor Company, Bethlehem Steel, has been responsible for building the steel infrastructure of the United States and the World. In 1997, we became Lehigh Heavy Forge, producing forged, heat treated, finish machined and inspected critical components to the US Navy, the Defense Industrial Base and Heavy Industry now for over 27 years.

LHF currently employs ~50 salaried workers as well as ~130 hourly workers. All of our hourly workers are a Union work force, represented by the Local 2599 branch of the United Steel Workers Union.

Today I'd like to talk briefly about some serious issues we at LHF are currently facing regarding the lack of a strong and full work force. This is not an issue unique to LHF, as you will hear from today's other testifiers, but one that currently has the entire United States Manufacturing Industry in a double arm bar. There are many reasons why we are currently in this predicament, but I will touch on a few main points to include:

1. Lack of qualified machinists, NDT Technicians, and Maintenance Technicians
2. Significant Local Job Market Competition
3. Employee Retention
4. Diminished Career Employee Culture
5. Fewer Real -Life Training Opportunities

As I mentioned, there are many reasons as to why we are facing this work force shortage and at such a critical time in the history of our country, and many of them are tied together. My testimony today will attempt to summarize some of the issues faced by LHF and our fellow manufacturers, especially in the Defense Industrial Base.

Back in the early 1990's, then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney announced the cancellation of the US Navy's Sea Wolf Class Submarine Program. While this was billed as a funding cut to save taxpayer money and focus on new technology items, what it did was decimate the Nation's Defense Industrial Base and help start the onset of the work force shortages in skilled labor we are facing today.

LHF's #1 issue faced regarding today's work force is the extreme lack of qualified machinists, NDT technicians and Maintenance technicians available for us to hire today. If I could flip a switch and have access to a pool of qualified machinists, I could justify hiring 20 of them overnight. The same sentiment goes for trying to bring on NDT and Maintenance technicians. But there just are not enough of them out in the market today to do so.

Another issue LHF faces in expanding our work force is significant competition in the local job market. Here in the Lehigh Valley, we are in of a hot bed of activities centrally located to a few major market centers. New York City is just 80 miles to our northeast, Philadelphia is 60 miles to our south and New Jersey is only 10 miles to our immediate east. In addition to these areas competing for the quantities of our jobs, they also offer a much higher wage base due to their higher costs of living. So this issue actually hits us with a double whammy.

Employee retention is another problem facing our work force today. With so many other options in our area and surrounding areas, coupled with the fact that manufacturing jobs in the forging business represent tough labor in a less-than-nice environment, holding on to workers also becomes problematic.

Coupled with retention issues is an issue we call diminished career employees. No longer exists the culture of a Bethlehem Steel where Grandpa worked there, Dad went to work there and little Johnny followed in their footsteps and worked there as well. Today's industry sees a lot of job hoppers chasing a buck and not settling in for the long haul.

And the last issue I will touch on is that of real-life training opportunities. Our middle schools and high schools no longer offer 'shop' classes to everyone. A college degree is lauded more than teaching real job skills, and companies very seldom offer apprenticeship programs. We do see some good technical schools in our area making some in-roads, but not on the scale for which we need to re-establish a significant skilled work force. Perhaps what could help this situation would be the establishment of an industrial training center where local companies work together with local schools through government funded initiatives to provide a more real-life training experience.

Lehigh Heavy Forge does participate in several, National initiatives aimed at driving work force development and collaboration within the manufacturing industry. We are a Plank Owner and Enterprise Member of the PA Talent Pipeline. And we are regular participants in the Marine Machinery Association, the Aircraft Carrier Industrial Base Coalition, the Submarine Industrial Base Coalition and the Forging Industry Association to name a few. It is imperative that the manufacturing industry bands together to address the current issues faced in work force development.

I would like to thank everyone for being here today to listen to the testimony on this important topic, and for my opportunity to present my viewpoints on the same. Thank you.

**Blair Woodring, Director Business Development, Precision Custom Components**

**Testimony, Republican Policy Committee**

**September 27, 2014**

1. History of PCC, back to its original work as S Morgan Smith
  - One of the more important heavy fabrication facilities in the early history of the State of PA, next to the steel making and mining efforts
  - Produced the early turbines for hydroelectric power
  - One of the primary fabricators in the beginnings of naval and commercial nuclear power
  - Union facility with positive relations with our Local, Aerospace Machinists
  - Comparable to a mini shipyard environment where we are joining metals and integrating other components to deliver a “built to print” module
  - A critical Level 1 vendor to the nuclear navy [The U.S. Navy’s Submarine Safety Standards \(bsee.gov\)](#)
  - Only US company to still maintain our ASME N stamp for the fabrication of 2. nuclear reactor pressure vessels [Nuclear Component Certification - ASME](#)
2. Current landscape of work and products provided to our customers (navy/commercial nuclear heavy fabrication and machining)
  - Machining, welding, nondestructive testing, design validation, final acceptance testing and inspection
  - Part of the Precision Components Group with DC Fabricators as a sister company in similar markets
  - @ 265 employed in York, working with York County Manufacturers Association and the Navy’s Talent Pipeline to develop our trade labor force
  - Privately held, going into its 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of family ownership
  - Challenged by sudden growth in demand from the Nuclear Navy and expectations of a commercial nuclear resurgence
3. Work with South Central PA Manufacturers Association
  - Specific programs include Technology and Innovation in Defense Ecosystem award for the development of skilled trades
4. US Navy Talent Pipeline involvement as the 2025 PA Company of Excellence – part of a national effort to build sustainable mgmt. growth and company performance. Focus on excellence on employee recruitment and retention.
5. Expansion potential and constraints
  - The startup of commercial nuclear power generation would lead to an immediate need for 2-3X expansion of areas under roof
  - Would create the near-term need for 100-200 welding, machining, fabrication, quality, and mechanical engineering.
  - The demands from the Navy for their ship builds has created a 20-year cycle of sustained employment – NOFORN requirements
  - 39-year amortization requirements constrains investment ahead of actual Purchase Orders
  - Access to State and Federal grants for manufacturing is not known to us
  - Current skilled labor force is not sufficient, applicants lacking fundamentals of consistent attendance and pride of workmanship
6. Asks include funding of the Max Manufacturing Initiative Act , [Robinson’s Landmark Advanced Manufacturing Initiative Signed into Law - Pennsylvania Senate Republicans \(pasenategop.com\)](#), and the ability to Carry Forward business losses without a cap



## Workforce Board Lehigh Valley Testimony at PA House Republican Policy Hearing

September 27, 2024  
Pennsylvania GOP House Policy Hearing  
Hosted by Rep. Ann Flood  
Northampton County

Nancy Dischinat, Executive Director of the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley (WBLV)  
Prepared Testimony

Thank you for inviting me to speak about the importance of Pennsylvania's workforce system and its impact on job seekers, workers, and employers.

I'm the Executive Director of the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley. Our community has over 16,000 employers in every sector, led by Healthcare, Transportation and Warehousing, and Manufacturing – our focused sector today because one, you asked me to concentrate on Manufacturing and two, the manufacturing sector provides an economic impact of 2.45 jobs.

The Lehigh Valley has a robust and diversified economy, strengthened through the alignment of business and industry, economic development, workforce development, education, training, and government.

The Workforce Board Lehigh Valley is proud to be designated by the Governor as a regional Workforce Development System for the Lehigh Valley, providing Adults, Dislocated Workers, Youth, and a universal population access to education, skills training, On-the-Job Training, work experiences, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and actually Ladies and Gentlemen, any kind of training that employers need based on high priority occupations, workforce data, and current and projected demand.

It is imperative to be current with employer needs and Workforce Systems must be aware, informed and ready! Continuously adding new skills along Career Pathways....the same mantra we tell educators every day...new skills along Career Pathways!

Recommendation One: Educational curricula must be agile, flexible and employer-driven.

Lehigh Valley's Workforce System directly impacts the economic vitality of our region and the Governor's 22 designated Workforce regions make up the Commonwealth's Workforce Development System.

The workforce landscape in the Lehigh Valley has evolved, particularly within our crucial manufacturing sector. We've heard directly from manufacturing employers who emphasize the importance of skilled labor to maintain productivity and growth. Companies are facing significant gaps in essential skills, particularly in advanced manufacturing technologies.

In preparing today's testimony, I worked with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce who serves as the Workforce Board's Business and Industry Intermediary to gather information and feedback from employers focusing on their Manufacturing Council, which provided insight into their most pressing business and workforce issues.

Therefore, I directed the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to distribute a survey to their entire manufacturing base and asked three questions:

1. What are your top three Business issues,
2. What are your top two Workforce Development issues, and
3. What are solutions or suggestions to these issues that could be introduced by legislators.

Manufacturers are facing significant gaps in both hard and soft skills, which we call employability skills, among applicants. Finding people to fill open positions is becoming increasingly difficult and fewer applicants have the hard skills these businesses need to succeed. Data point: 31% of Lehigh Valley's workforce are aged 19-34 which is showing an increase.

Lehigh Valley businesses compete against each other for an increasingly small pool of skilled manufacturing workers. The Manufacturing sector in the Lehigh Valley employs 36,329 workers and represents 11.3% of the workforce. Healthcare is Lehigh Valley's number one employer with nearly 20% of the workforce and 64,000+ workers, which attracts even job seekers with manufacturing skills.

While we can all appreciate that competition is a positive market force, our companies are suffering because we are not growing a technically-skilled workforce fast enough and we do not have a Career & Technical Education system that is mainstreamed, nor is it forefront in education.

Recommendation Two: Grow a workforce pipeline through technical training and have fully-funded Career & Technical Education opportunities directly embedded in high schools. No student should have to drive 45 minutes from their home schools to get technical trained.

Recommendation Three: Provide technical, mechatronics, industrial maintenance, machining, computer numerical controls, programmable logic controls, Quality Control, crane operators, millwrights and many more manufacturing skills! Fund Career & Technical Education to instruct, develop employer-driven curriculum, purchase state-of-the-art equipment based on industry sector needs, thereby increasing the workforce pipeline, especially our youth....where our workforce is coming from.

To solve the skilled worker problem, every business is asking for more funding to upskill workers or stronger training partnerships with the Workforce System, community colleges and career & technical schools to ensure that the curriculum is employer-led, so incoming workers have the skills businesses need to fill jobs.

Recommendation Four: Mandate a Regional Employer-Driven Industry and Workforce Committee to ensure current and next steps skills training for targeted industry sectors like Manufacturing.

As a Workforce Board, we ARE part of the solution and your partners in change!

We are working closely with manufacturers to develop targeted training programs that prepare workers for high-demand roles. The employer-led Industrial Training and Education Consortium or iTEC is instrumental in bridging this skills gap through the pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship model, which provides the pathway to.....your hired! The iTEC consortium received the Employer Award at the 2024 PWDA Annual Conference, a testament to its success. Attached is more information on the iTEC model.

Recommendation Five: Employers need flexible, not restrictive, funding to implement and replicate an iTEC Model.

To meet a looming workforce skills shortage, the Lehigh Valley is aligned through creation of a strategic model that unites the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation and all municipal agencies, educational and training providers from higher education to community colleges, to high schools, and government. After all, collectively we all have to answer to this skills gap issue, but you must work with us to find solutions!

Recommendation Six: Establish a solutions consortium of these organizations to work with policymakers to close the skills gaps. One testimony only starts the conversation. As Joan Rivers used to say, "Legislators, let's talk!"

We need a stronger focus on youth development. When I contacted companies, two concerns arose: 1. an aging workforce and 2. unprepared incoming workforce. If we want our workforce to serve the needs of our businesses, we need a specific focus to prepare young people, with the skills for jobs vacated by current workers.

In the Lehigh Valley, we've developed successful youth programs that could serve as a model for the commonwealth. We've installed PA CareerLink® kiosks in high schools to provide students with jobs, training, and workforce resources. Our Youth Ambassadors program also empowers young people to mentor their peers in exploring career pathways. Programs like these ensure that students are prepared to enter the workforce and have clear pathways toward fulfilling careers. Many employers we spoke with also wanted more incentives for young people to enter the workforce and gain critical skills while on the job.

Employers are looking for programs that provide workforce dollars for "funding to hire our talent....resources to train onsite.....upskilling and reskilling initiatives to keep pace with new and emerging technological advances and industry changes....allocate more resources to make training more accessible and affordable based on industry demand.... more outreach to high

schools and elementary schools to create interest in manufacturing career paths.....incentivize businesses to hire from non-traditional communities, including non-college graduates and those from diverse backgrounds, through tax credits and grants....more support for language training and education programs...offer targeted incentives such as student loan assistance or sign-on bonuses.”

As one employer stated, “I’ve been trying to do this for years, but the cost is prohibitive.”

Recommendation Seven: Increase student interest in career and technical education, embed skills training onsite within high schools, develop a class on Manufacturing embedded in the high school curriculum, and provide resources, in partnership with the PA Workforce Development Board and the PA Workforce Development Association, to design and develop Workforce Centers right in the high schools through regional Workforce Development Boards that direct workforce services and career pathways to youth.

Unshackle state workforce systems. Federal funding drives much of what workforce boards can and cannot do. However, the one-size-fits-all federal approach does not always meet Pennsylvania's unique needs or the unique needs of our workforce. WBLV supports the idea of creating a Pennsylvania-defined workforce system that allows us more flexibility in addressing local and regional priorities. A Pennsylvania-focused system would include better access to real-time labor market data and increased autonomy to create programs tailored to the needs of employers and job seekers in the Lehigh Valley and Pennsylvania. We are currently only getting a financial appetizer menu through the state because of limited funding.

We need to #FreeTheData. Access to high-quality, up-to-date workforce data is essential for making any informed decisions. The workforce system needs to be able to track job openings, skills gaps, and emerging industries in real time so we can develop immediate, responsive action plans.

Data is knowledge. At the WBLV, we have partnered with our local planning commission to build staff capacity and resources to better understand and strategically use data to drive decision-making.

Through collaboration, innovation, flexibility, and state resources, we will continue to dance as fast as we can to build a workforce that meets business and industry needs.

Pennsylvania policymakers have the opportunity to impact employers, workers and job seekers through the creation of an integrated, innovative, skills-based, and jobs-driven workforce platform.

# ITEC Industrial Training & Education Consortium of the Lehigh Valley

## Participating Companies



## Collaborating Organizations



## Training Partners



## Accreditation



**John Rhatigan P.E.**  
**Chairman of the Board**  
**The Marine Machinery Association**  
**Testimony to the Pennsylvania Republican Caucus at Lehigh Heavy Forge**

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the Pennsylvania Republican Caucus. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today at Lehigh Heavy Forge—a remarkable testament to American resilience and hard work. A special thanks goes to Mike Druckenmiller from Lehigh Forge for asking me to speak in front of this prestigious group. Standing in this facility, I'm reminded of the values that shaped my own life and the importance of supporting our manufacturing sector.

A little Background about me

I was born in Boston to a blue-collar immigrant family. My parents came to this country with little more than the clothes on their backs, driven by a desire for a better life. My father began his journey working as a laborer in the tire industry and eventually became a self-made stationary power plant engineer. I still vividly remember my older brother asking my father questions when he was in his 50's before one of his licensing exams. I will never forget watching my dad and having that dedication and determination unfold.

Growing up, my family didn't have the financial means to support my education, but their unwavering work ethic instilled in me the drive to succeed. I pursued college and graduate school on my own, determined to make the most of the opportunities available to me. I am a registered Professional engineer, hold numerous patents and consider myself a lifetime learner. My story is a testament to what hard work and perseverance can achieve, but it also underscores the challenges many families face in our country today. Many children don't come from a two parent company, many don't speak English as a first language, many don't have the financial resources to finish high school, never mind go for additional training after high school.

Out of college I worked for two major shipbuilders for a combined 10 years. I was a test engineer at Newport news shipbuilding testing 688 class submarines. At Bath Iron Works I was the construction manager assigned to the USS John Paul Jones, a \$3 Billion dollar warship. I then went into private industry for a DOD contractor where I designed and manufactured equipment for the US Navy for 23 years rising to the position of Vice President of Engineering. After that my career pivoted to a Vice President of Engineering and Manufacturing for two metal processing manufacturing plants in Providence Rhode Island and New Castle PA. While carrying a full workload I was moonlighting doing engineering work for a roadside safety company. Since 2016 have owned my own company in which I have been tasked to be the chairman of the Marine Machinery Association -a nonprofit that helps the maritime industrial base work smarter for the US Navy and our maritime industrial base. I am also the chief engineer for that Roadway safety company. In my spare time I have been publicly speaking on the topic of workforce development since 1993.

Some of my more notable Topics covered in my speeches have included

- How to develop High School Students for entering the manufacturing workforce

- “Where are the girls” and how do we attract them to manufacturing.
- What I wished my teachers, or first boss told me when I took my first job out of college
- Shipbuilding is a contact sport
- How to enter the maritime industry and deal with the myriads of terms and conditions, government specifications and quality requirements

## Background on the Industry that Supports the US Navy and Shipbuilding Community

As we gather here, we must recognize the critical importance of supporting our manufacturing workforce. Pennsylvania’s manufacturing sector is not just vital to the state economy; it is the backbone of the industrial base that supports the US Navy. Yet, we are grappling with significant challenges, particularly a skilled labor shortage. As older generations retire, we must ensure that a new generation is ready to step up.

The surge in shipbuilding that is occurring in this country hasn’t been seen in over 50 years. Submarines, Aircraft Carriers, Destroyers, Frigates, and Coast Guard fleet replacement are all happening at the same time. In the case of Subs, we are retiring submarines faster than we can currently build them. One estimate says the industry needs 10,000 new welders by 2030. On top of that there is extreme competition for talent out there. The Wind power industry believes they will need 40,000 new workers this decade. Construction and the medical communities face the same potential worker shortages. This is directly impacting the shipbuilding industry the major shipyards, Newport News Shipbuilding, for example, is hiring 2,000 new employees this year.

To address this, we need to focus on three key areas: education, workforce development, and public-private partnerships.

I will concentrate on Workforce Development

There are two current Workforce Development success stories I want to share.

The first is the Pipeline Project, formerly known as the Pennsylvania Pipeline project. This group was stood up in 2021 at Union Hall in downtown Philly. I have been advising this group since 2020 on whether it was feasible. With Navy funding and guidance, it has been a great success. It takes the manufacturers in Pennsylvania, students and the educational institutions and is training first class students for the industry. Each successful student goes through a signing night that rivals anything a top-level athlete would see. This is the classic example of public and private partnering. Since the original program started in Philly the program has expanded to include Pittsburgh, Hampton Roads, Boston, Long Island, and Southern California. Over 3,000 new hires have come out of the system since 2021.

Secondly the Accelerated Training in Defense Manufacturing (ATDM) program in Danville Virginia is a national asset. It is a four-month program where students live in a campus setting while having a vigorous education all paid for the US Navy. Again, training and lodging is free. Students sent by a company still get paid by the company during the training period. I first visited there in January of 2020 and thought every member of my association should visit there within a year. Unfortunately,

that never happened due to Covid. But ATDM has rebounded from COVID with great results. Just last year I was the keynote speaker at a Graduation and approximately 150 new first-class workers entered or reentered the workforce. ATDM is currently graduating 600 skilled workers per year and are planning to graduate 1000 students per year starting in 2025. A new 107,000 square foot additive manufacturing building is scheduled to open in the spring of 2025. Happy to say That the Marine Machinery Association is going back to ATDM next month.

Thank you for your commitment to this vital cause, and for the opportunity to share my story and vision today.