

House Select Subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness

4/28/15, 9:30 a.m., Room G-50, Irvis Office Building

By Matt Hess and Jeff Cox

Committee(s):	House Select Subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness
Audio:	 (click here) (Note: Depending on your audio player and the length of the hearing this could take a few minutes to load.)
Meeting type:	Public Hearing
Subject:	Technical Education and Career Readiness
Bills discussed:	HR 102
Keyword(s):	Workforce Investment Boards, economy, job training, public education
Testimony:	Diane Bosak , Acting Deputy Secretary of Workforce Development, Department of Labor and Industry Ed Legge , Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Department of Labor and Industry Lee Burket , Director, Department of Education Bureau of Career and Technical Education Hannah Smith-Brubaker , Deputy Secretary for Market Development, Department of Agriculture Jacqueline Cullen , Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA) Walter Slauch , Vice President, PACTA David Thomas , Administrative Director, York County School of Technology Thomas Allen , President PACTA Vicki Smith , Board President, Homer Center School District Eric Wolfgang , Board President, Central York School District James Buckheit , Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) David Namey , President, Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)
Members Present:	Chairman Seth Grove (R-York), Minority Chairman Pat Harkins (D-Erie), Rep. Stan Saylor (R-York), Rep. Harry Lewis (R-Chester), Rep. Kristen Phillips Hill (R-York), Rep. Mike Tobash (R-Schuylkill), and Rep. Mark Longietti (D-Mercer).

The subcommittee held a public hearing pursuant to HR 102 on technical education and career readiness.

[HR 102 Saylor, Stanley](#) - (PN 567) Resolution authorizing the House Education Committee to establish the select subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness to investigate, review and make recommendations concerning career training programs to ensure opportunity to pursue meaningful career. The subcommittee shall reports its finding with its recommendations for any appropriate legislation or other action to the House Education Committee and to the House by November 30, 2016.

Chairman Grove explained that the subcommittee will host a series of hearings throughout the state before it issues a report that is due in a year. "I fully believe the more work we do as a Select Committee the better the final product we develop," he stated.

[Diane Bosak](#), Acting Deputy Secretary of Workforce Development, Department of Labor and Industry, discussed Gov. Tom Wolf's proposal for career and technical education (CTE). "The budget provides \$15 million to help school districts with Career and Technology Centers, higher education institutions, employers and labor organizations to train students for high demand, high growth occupations that pay a living wage and offer a career ladder," she stated. "Students will have the opportunity to earn college

credit and industry credentials and will participate in work-based learning. Approximately 30 grants of up to \$500,000 each will be awarded, with at least one in each Workforce Investment Area. The Department will administer this program jointly with the Departments of Education and Community and Economic Development."

[Ed Legge](#), Center for Workforce Information and Analysis, Department of Labor and Industry, explained approximately six million people were employed in Pennsylvania in 2012, the base year for the department's most recent occupational projections. He projected that by 2022 employment will exceed 6.5 million which equates to a projected growth of 7.7 percent from 2012 through 2022.

"Job opportunities, or annual openings, are not only a result of employment growth. There are also a significant number of opportunities that result from the need to replace workers who leave the occupation. On average, only 25 percent of job openings are a result of employment growth," Legge stated. "In Pennsylvania, nearly 200,000 job openings are projected each year. Of those, more than 26,000 are expected in occupations that are CTE-related. With above average growth and more than 13 percent of all job openings, occupations in the CTE-related groups have a very bright employment outlook."

Chairman Grove questioned how the state coordinates with schools to make students aware of apprenticeship programs and job growth in technical skill areas. Bosak explained that the Center for Workforce Information and Analysis prepares a number of reports and materials that the department shares with guidance counselors in traditional schools and career and technical centers (CTCs). "We are looking at ways to expand our apprenticeship program so we can make more employers, students, educators and parents aware of apprenticeship opportunities," she stated. "We have been flat in terms of employers that have participated in apprenticeship programs. We've been at over 700 employers engaged and 11,000 apprentices. While that number signs high, it has been fairly stagnant. We are looking to bolster our apprentice activities in the state and make people more aware of it."

Rep. Hill questioned how the department's initiatives will reach the local school district. Bosak said the department relies on the Department of Education (PDE), Department of Community and Economic Development, and the Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to assist in making the local connections. "We don't necessarily have the direct relationships with the CTCs, a lot of the work is with our partners," she stated. "There are 22 local Workforce Investment Boards and they are responsible for connecting with local employers, training providers whether those are CTCs, community colleges, universities or trade schools, they are making those connections. In regions, several Workforce Investment Boards come together and that is the regional planning process."

Rep. Saylor, Chairman of the House Education Committee, lauded the South Carolina model for Career and Technical Education and dismissed the stigma of CTCs. "People do still have the old image of manufacturing, they have the old image of you are not successful unless you get a four-year degree and if you go to a trade school, a technical school, or a votech school you are a dummy or a trouble maker," he stated. "South Carolina has done an fantastic job of reaching out to parents and students...I don't think we in Pennsylvania have moved in that direction, I think we are still living in the dark ages." Bosak affirmed that the department is examining the best practices of other states including South Carolina but emphasized that there are a number of positive initiatives in Pennsylvania including the SMART (Science in Math Applications in Real World Technologies) Girls Summer Camp in the Central WIB, Careers in 2 Years in the Montgomery and Bucks County WIBs, and the Lehigh Valley Career Pathways Initiative in the Lehigh Valley WIB. "There are pockets of things that are happening that could help us if we could share that information with more parents and more students to make them more aware," she stated.

[Lee Burket](#), Director, Department of Education Bureau of Career and Technical Education, explained that in 2014 Pennsylvania's total student enrollment in CTE was 65,563 students in grades nine through 12 which is approximately 12 percent of the state total enrollment of 550,758 student in grades nine through 12.

"The Department has worked collaboratively with the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA), Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) and the Pennsylvania State Education Association in developing a

number of CTE resources. The Department also works collaboratively with the Pennsylvania departments of Agriculture, Labor and Industry, and the State Workforce Investment Board," Burket stated. "These collaborations along with the commitment of the department enable it to provide technical assistance and resources that support the local entities as they strive toward providing CTE and career opportunities to increased numbers of students. The result is an increased number of students enrolling in CTE, increased numbers of students existing high school with industry recognized skills credentials and Pennsylvania Skills Certificates and college credits in careers where employment is available."

Burket also offered recommendations for CTE education:

- All approved secondary CTE programs provide the opportunity for their students to earn program industry related certifications that lead to increased employability;
- Alignment of academic courses to each career pathway should be strengthened to ensure students enrolling in CTE programs are at grade level and ready to pursue their careers;
- CTE should be a requirement rather than an elective to avoid this conflict with Keystone remediation.

Chairman Grove noted that Harley Davidson is interested in getting students to work at its manufacturing center and asked if work release is still available for high school students. Burket explained that work release is for students who have completed their graduation requirements and they can be released from school to go to work. "It's not part of the educational program so I would need further detail on that conversation," she stated.

Rep. Saylor suggested that Gov. Wolf petition President Obama to allow Pennsylvania to create a pilot program where the federal government would remove all mandates on job training funds and allow the governor to craft a program that meets the needs of Pennsylvania's employers and workers. "Left to our design for customizing these dollars for Pennsylvania, we can do a better job than the federal mandates," he stated.

Rep. Longietti noted that the current educational system presupposes that every student is going to a four-year university and encouraged the department to enhance CTE programs. He questioned how the department can get districts to utilize proven models of CTE programs. Burket said the department utilizes a number of partnerships with PSBA, PASA, and PACTA to encourage the implementation of best practices for CTCs and traditional public schools.

Rep. Tobash agreed that the Keystone Exams serve as an impediment to getting students further exposure to CTE programs and indicated that the committee is committed to examining the issue.

Rep. Lewis expressed concern about the cost to school districts for students that are attending the CTCs and questioned what can be done to mitigate those costs. Burket explained that the tuition costs are determined by each of the school districts. "The department sits on the Basic Education Funding Commission and I know they examining how that formula is going to be calculated and I know that is part of the discussion," she stated.

[Hannah Smith-Brubaker](#), Deputy Secretary for Market Development, Department of Agriculture, emphasized that the agriculture and food industry must address a number of human capital issues in order for Pennsylvania to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

"We have a great challenge ahead of us as we think about getting many more people onto the career pathways that lead to the technical jobs needed in the agriculture and food industry. We need a shared and demand-driven vision of where we are going. We need to be realistic about the resources that we have in career and technical education and the gaps that exist, which are barriers to our goals," Smith-Brubaker stated. "We need to develop new collaborations between the industry, government, and education to address the barriers and develop a plan of action. Finally, we need the will to be innovative as we bring the solutions for our talent issues to a scale that will allow Pennsylvania companies to continue to be leaders in the global economy."

Chairman Grove wanted to know what states provide academic standards for agricultural education or if there are any best practices. Smith-Brubaker responded that she would have to get the information. She added that Pennsylvania once did have such standards and that a lot of effort was put into developing a system but it had not been funded over the years. Chairman Grove then asked if the state provides any teacher professional development programs to get teachers out into agricultural communities. Smith-Brubaker explained that most of that is done informally. She further explained the IU 13 program is the only formal program she is aware of.

Rep. Hill wanted to know about the collaboration between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education in developing a set of standards for agricultural education. According to Smith-Brubaker, the departments "have gotten together at the table." She said, "We have expressed from a workforce perspective that it is imperative that something be developed." Smith-Brubaker added that there has not been anything done formally at this point. Rep. Hill asked if the standards are optional for school districts to use as a guide to develop their own standards. Smith-Brubaker responded, "Yes."

Rep. Saylor expressed concern that adults in the Commonwealth are not aware of what is going on in agriculture and how things in the world affect agriculture. He commented, "I am really concerned as we move forward that we have done a good job in Pennsylvania preserving farmland but I don't think we have done very good job in preserving farmers." Rep. Saylor urged the department to work with the grocery stores here in Pennsylvania to develop a program not only on Pennsylvania products but what agriculture is about. He commended the department for the great job it does with the money it has. Smith-Brubaker responded that through the PA Preferred Program the department has tried to get much better in getting the consumer to "make the connection between the farmer and the plate." She noted that the larger grocery stores have been very responsive through that program. Smith-Brubaker said when she started at the department she commented, "We have spent so much time trying to make agriculture attractive to young people by sort of getting further and further away that we have somehow forgot to emphasize that farming is an honorable career path." She added, "I hope we don't forget that message."

Rep. Lewis noted that Smith-Brubaker had mentioned aquaponics in her testimony and including it at the career technical centers and "helping our young people become accustomed to this type of growth in the new age of farming." He also noted that Cheyney University has a large aquaponic facility on campus. Rep. Lewis asked if aquaponics is viable in including it at some of the local technical high schools. Smith-Brubaker responded, "Absolutely." She added, "The wonderful thing about it is it can be done almost year round, doesn't require a lot of land, and the marketing potentials are just phenomenal today."

[Jacqueline Cullen](#), Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA), emphasized the need to increase funding for CTC programs in Pennsylvania and argued that increasing the amount of Basic Education Subsidy by \$4,000 for every student that is enrolled in CTE at an area CTC would address the excess cost experienced by member school districts.

Cullen offered the subcommittee the following recommendations.

- Increase the amount of money available and the number of PDE competitive equipment grants;
- The Pennsylvania Legislative Supplemental Funding for CTE instructional equipment should be included as a line item in future state budgets and be appropriated at the same or higher level;
- The Pennsylvania State Career and Technical Education Subsidy should be increased to a maximum of \$1,500 per student while enrolled in a PDE approved CTE Program;
- Additional study is recommended on the impact of Keystone Testing on CTC enrollments and NOCTI or other PDE approved industry credentials be considered as an alternative to the Keystone Testing requirements for CTE students;
- Funding should be established to increase the availability of career counseling and information to all Pennsylvania students.

Chairman Grove asked about the interaction between CTCs and local WIBs. Cullen responded that "it is excellent in some areas and not so good in others." [Thomas Allen](#), PACTA President, commented that he is from Montgomery County and said that they have a very good relationship with their workforce investment board. [Water Slauch](#), PACTA Vice President, who is also from Montgomery County, pointed

out his school is located about three-quarters of a mile from the local workforce investment board office. He said that his school works very closely with the board and there are administrators at the school who sit on various committees of the local workforce investment board. Slauch described the communication and relationship as "very good." [David Thomas](#), Administrative Director, York County School of Technology, described the relationship with the local board as "pretty good." Chairman Grove then asked if there is anything the state does that prevents the CTCs from adapting to new careers training or new technologies. Allen explained that the start-up costs for a new program can be significant so any help with that would be helpful. Cullen commented that the Bureau of Career and Technical Education has been very supportive of looking at innovative ways of doing things reacting to what is going on in the field and providing needed technical assistance. She expressed concern with graduation requirements and said the Keystone Exams have the potential of causing disenrollments and kids being held back from enrolling.

Rep. Saylor noted that he met with Chancellor Frank Brogan of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). He asked the panelists if they had been contacted by universities, colleges and community colleges regarding how they could help them. Allen responded that he has not been approached by universities and colleges about programs but they do recruit at their schools. Thomas explained that his school has a good relationship with the Pennsylvania College of Technology and works with the Thaddeus Stevens School. Slauch also said his school's relationship with colleges and universities is more on a recruiting basis. Cullen mentioned that there are three schools that have a relationship with Bloomsburg University. She added that she has been contacted by PASSHE about setting up a meeting to discuss how PASSHE may be able to help CTCs. Rep. Saylor asked how colleges and universities could be more helpful. Cullen responded, "I think one of the things would be if the state system schools started programs which could be articulated with CTE programs."

Rep. Tobash described the Keystone Exams as an "impediment to applicable learning." He said that the exams "are shrinking our learning time and replacing it with assessment time." Rep. Tobash commented, "We are going to be successful when I see a valedictorians graduating from CTCs." He said there is a need for some level of assessment but express his concerns with the Keystone Exams. Rep. Tobash wanted to know what could be done at this juncture to help make CTCs better. Cullen responded, "I think there is nothing wrong with having Keystone Exams but we don't believe the whole of a student's K through 12 education and ability to graduate be based on three exams." She added, "We believe in accountability but we don't believe those exams should be required." Rep. Tobash asked about the enrollment at the York school. Thomas explained that the school has 1,600 students and there will be close to 1,700 next year. He pointed out, "We could be larger but we have been asked to stay at this size because the finances for the districts have become a burden to send their students to our school." Thomas added, "Basically, to save money we are holding our school population down."

Chairman Grove asked about allowing local businesses to donate to startup a program in return for a tax credit or deduction modeled after the EITC program. Cullen explained that for a number of years CTCs have received large contributions from companies for equipment. She added that CTCs receive "great support from the business community."

[Vicki Smith](#), Board President, Homer Center School District, emphasized that "career and technical education is not old-school vocational education by another name" and discussed how the education has changed. "The National Association of State Directors of Career Education Consortium emphasizes that two-thirds of jobs created by 2022 will require some form of postsecondary education. Modern career and technical education is adaptable, cross-cutting and a partner - not an alternative -- to college preparatory education. Students who are CTE concentrators are far less likely to drop out of high school than the national average, a difference estimated to save the economy \$168 billion each year. Recent studies also find that over 75 percent of CTE concentrators pursue postsecondary education after graduating high school," she stated. "Pennsylvania continues to develop Programs of Study to ensure secondary and postsecondary students are enrolled in challenging academic and technical coursework. Technical skill attainment has steadily improved over the last several years."

[Eric Wolfgang](#), Board President, Central York School District, explained that there are 14 school districts in York County that comprise the sending districts York County School of Technology and said York Tech is one of only a few comprehensive technical schools throughout the state which supports technical

programs and also all academic subject areas. He discussed funding concerns related to York Tech. "Because our tech school is comprised of 14 different sending school districts, it is becoming increasingly more challenging to meet the budgetary needs of the tech school, when each of our 14 districts are wrestling with our own budget constraints every year. York County has been one of the fastest growing areas of the state over the past decade, but state funding has not kept pace with this growth. We very much want to increase programming and student population at the school, but have had to proceed more slowly than we would have liked because of such a small amount of state funding that goes directly to the tech school," he stated. "The tech school is not allowed to maintain a fund balance of any significant amount making it difficult to plan for normal year-to-year maintenance of the facilities. When major unexpected expenses do arise, the 14 school districts have to come up with the necessary funds to address the concern, usually without any advance budgetary planning on their own budgets."

Chairman Grove asked about individualized learning plans, Wolfgang said that Central York has its own STEM program at the high school. He explained that individual learning plans allow them to increase the number of part-time participants at the local technical school.

[James Buckheit](#), Executive Director of PASA, highlighted the main issues facing CTE in Pennsylvania:

- Dual accountability requirements of Keystone Exams and industry certification exams for career and tech students;
- Unintended consequence of new, stricter child abuse and criminal background check requirements on placements of co-op students, internships and other workplace placements;
- Ongoing budgetary pressures are driving districts to establish some of their own career and technical programs or consider withdrawing from sponsorship of the local CTC

"Given the rapid changes occurring in Pennsylvania's economy and for ever increasing workplace skills demanded by employers, it is essential that state leadership, policies and funding provide flexibility that allows local career and technical programs to respond to labor market needs and future employment demands," Buckheit stated. "We suggest the subcommittee undertake a comprehensive review of state laws, regulations and policies, including those that have unintended consequences, on the ability of high schools and career and technology centers to readily attract, train and graduate students who meet the workforce needs of Pennsylvania's employers well into the future."

Chairman Grove asked Buckheit to provide more in-depth suggestion on how to alleviate the burdens on schools.

Rep. Tobash asked about the impact of consolidation to save money. Buckheit responded, "In theory that always makes sense but sometimes at a local practical level it doesn't." He explained that a school district may have a computer science instructor already on the staff so they have some capacity to deliver those instructional career programs, Buckheit added, "It is not always the case but you have to deal with it on a case by case basis." Rep. Tobash then wanted to know the main cost drivers at the local school districts. According to Buckheit it is largely personnel costs and legacy costs and also charter school costs.

Chairman Grove asked about background checks and how they can be done in a rational way. Buckheit said that first and foremost is protecting the children from those who do not have the best interest of those children on their minds. He added that it needs to be made very clear about who is expected to have the checks done when a student is placed out in the field. Buckheit also suggested having the background checks done in a one-stop setting.

[David Namey](#), President, Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), gave an overview of CTE programs in Pennsylvania. "CTE in Pennsylvania schools focus on a mix of career skills, academics, and real world application - opening the door for students to career pathways that link learning to work," he stated. "The goal is to provide students with a full range of options, whether they choose to go to work right after high school or to pursue college or other post-secondary education. CTE also offers a way for school to re-engage students who learn best when abstract concepts are connected to concrete real life applications. In today's competitive global economy, CTE is more vital to our students than ever before."

Namey offered the following recommendations for CTE programs in Pennsylvania:

- CTE programs need employers who are committed to providing extended learning opportunities in the workplace and support for the transition of our students into the labor market;
- Pennsylvania needs an early and sustained career information and advising system to help students and families make informed choices about education and careers;
- The Commonwealth needs to invest in CTE programs by increasing the state's funding commitments.

Chairman Grove asked about guidance counselors and whether they are being overworked or being diverted from trying to match student with career possibilities. Namey responded that their focus is being diverted because of crime in schools, student suicides, and other issues. He suggested the need to start focusing on the students in earlier grades. Chairman Grove asked when would be the right time. Namey responded that there would be nothing wrong with beginning discussions in 5th or 6th grade. Pointing out that the Harley Davidson plant is in York County, Chairman Grove asked about having students tour the facility to see how a manufacturing plant operates. Namey suggested that students need to be exposed to manufacturing to see how a modern manufacturing business operates. Chairman Grove then asked about interaction with other teachers and if exposure to career training is part of their professional development. Namey explained that it is something they have been doing in the Wilkes-Barre area for a number of years. He said that it gives teachers an insight into curricula and what could be beneficial to the students. Chairman Grove asked if it is well received. Namey responded, "Yes."