

TEAM PENNSYLVANIA

Good morning Senators, panelists, members of the community - on behalf of our Co-Chairs Governor Tom Wolf and Dr. Stephen Tang, and our Board of Directors consisting of business, education, and government leaders from throughout the Commonwealth, we thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Ryan Unger and I am honored to serve as President & CEO of Team Pennsylvania Foundation, the commonwealth's nonpartisan, 501c3 public-private partnership. We have 20 years of experience working together and convening government and industry leadership to focus on critical issues impacting workforce and economic development. If there is something that has been consistent from our early days to the present, it is the need for a productive and skilled workforce. At Team PA, we see career readiness as *more* than "an education issue" - it's one that not only involves parents, teachers, administrators, but business leaders, human resource professionals and data analysts. It is integral to ensuring Pennsylvania's current and future economic prosperity.

The skills gap conversations taking place across Pennsylvania are echoed in every other state in America: our current system is not producing the students that exhibit the qualities that employers need. Students and their families want the same end result as employers want: graduates who are ready, willing, and able to take on the careers of tomorrow.

In early 2017 we worked with our public-sector partners to gain a snapshot of where we were. Pennsylvania school districts completed a comprehensive survey about their career readiness activities. With a 30% response rate from districts that serve almost 50% of the commonwealth's students geographically spread across the state, the findings are as good a representation of our current levels of career readiness activities that we have.

Here are some of the important takeaways:

First, access to career readiness opportunities vary widely, especially by region and grade level. High school students, for example, have significantly more programs available to them than elementary school students.

Second, it should be noted and recognized that the state does have Career and Education work standards, although availability and awareness of resources to implement them is limited across the state. Responses ranged from needing more dedicated time and funding, to needing greater access to professional development and business partnerships.

Third, labor market information does not inform current career readiness activities, with only a handful of school districts noting on the survey that they use this data to plan their work . We not only have a skills gap. We have a data gap.

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Rather than argue whether the employers need to do a better job investing in the talent they seek to hire, or criticizing our already burdened schools that they need to adjust their curricula and instruction, we need to focus on creating the right conditions for our systems to thrive so they better meet the needs of our communities and economy.

To do that, in all of our work here at Team Pennsylvania, we value hearing directly from leaders of business and industry. Our success with career readiness work will depend on our ability to listen to the needs of our commonwealth's employers, analyze data and future workforce trends, and respond accordingly, and I'm heartened to see some of those voices represented here today.

In addition, we need to build on our strong foundation of career readiness activities in many regions of Pennsylvania, addressing needs, building on strengths, and benchmarking to national best practices.

Finally, we need to recognize that there is not a silver bullet or a single solution. We are a diverse state with multiple regional economies. This work succeeds or fails based on regional leadership and the relationships between schools, districts, businesses, postsecondary institutions, local chambers of business and industry, intermediaries, local workforce development boards, local economic development entities, and other key community organizations. But, with that said it is also imperative we have state-level leadership. We need to elevate these conversations, highlight the great work already being done, and connect the dots between the multiple regions that drive our state forward, and we appreciate the effort to do that today.

Thank you for your time and interest, and we look forward to answering your questions.