



205 House Avenue, Suite 101, Camp Hill, PA 17011 | roshea@pawork.org | www.pawork.org

Dear [Legislator]

We appreciate all of the work you have done to make Pennsylvania's workforce development system solid and responsive to the needs of job seekers, workers, and businesses. Pennsylvania is facing an unprecedented economic environment.

Businesses, public private partnerships, non profits, and academic institutions must make sure employers can find the skilled talent they need, and jobseekers can access family-sustaining employment.

Local Workforce Development Boards are the first point of contact for those seeking to improve their skills, find quality employment, or build their workforce. We sit at the intersection of employers, education, and workers.

Our interventions and initiatives provide meaningful outcomes and help to match unemployed workers with open positions in a timely manner and grow knowledge and skills. Like all organizations, we need to be able to evaluate and change our workforce practices, policies and programs as we learn more about the results.

It's difficult to do this without data.

In the last several years, economic and workforce conditions have changed quickly. All organizations need access to more real-time data that reflect the realities in the field for our workforce development system. Currently, data shared by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry is limited to federal compliance reporting; our #FreetheData effort promotes a movement that focuses on continuous improvement and performance evaluation for all of Pennsylvania's communities.

Pennsylvania already collects and protects workforce data on unemployment claimants, unemployment wages, and new hires. This is not asking for new data. It is simply the data that the commonwealth already receives, but provided in a more timely and usable manner. By accessing existing data, organizations - like local workforce development boards - can more efficiently address service delivery gaps and improve government transparency and openness.

The legislature and the Shapiro Administration should consider and pass legislation to fix this problem and allow organizations to provide timely services to workers, job seekers, and employers.

Legislation to #FreetheData should have two primary components.



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First, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry should share unemployment claims, unemployment wages, and new hire database information with a variety of trusted stakeholders including Pennsylvania's local workforce development boards for performance accountability, evaluation, and research.

Second, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry should develop an accessible and usable dashboard platform that allows streamlined, user-friendly access to the data at any point in time. This dashboard approach promotes equity in the data access and overcomes the analysis constraints that rural and smaller non-profit boards may face.

A simple policy change like #FreetheData can make our programs stronger and more responsive. It can help match employers and job seekers and provide the right training programs for emerging skills and market needs. It promotes shared responsibility and collaboration between the state and local workforce systems and eliminates administrative burdens that often become roadblocks to improving services.

Please consider legislation to #FreetheData so organizations like ours can help businesses and workers build the right programs and initiatives for workers, businesses, and job seekers.

Thank you for your focus and work on improving our commonwealth's workforce.

Sincerely,

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Ami Gatts, President
Southwest Corner Workforce Development
Board

Erica Mulberger, Executive Director
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