



## PENNSYLVANIA

December 8, 2016

The Honorable Tom Wolf  
Governor of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

We respectfully request that you continue to keep Pennsylvania's youngest learners at the forefront of your gubernatorial agenda as you begin planning the state budget for the 2017-18 Fiscal Year.

As leaders in Pennsylvania's chamber and economic development community, we are well aware of how much the success of our member businesses relies on the skills and capabilities of their employees. Unfortunately, a report released from ReadyNation this summer shows that the statewide shortage of skilled workers, particularly those in the STEM fields, will continue to worsen in the coming years.

According to a Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry survey of more than 400 employers, 52 percent of report having difficulty finding hires with adequate education, training, or credentials. This is especially true of technical or skilled positions. Pennsylvania businesses spend about \$188.9 million each year on retraining employees, and yet about 56% of employers expect the recruiting problem to worsen.

Sadly, these figures make sense since 28% of students entering the state system of higher education have to enroll in remedial courses, costing about \$153 million every year. Looking back even further, research shows that two-thirds of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are not proficient in math and science – two disciplines in which proficiency has become more and more critical for thriving in today's STEM-driven economy.

Reversing these trends takes a comprehensive approach that includes early education. Research data shows that children's knowledge of mathematics at preschool age (3- and 4-years old) predicts their later school success into elementary, middle and even high school.

As you know, programs like Pre-K Counts and Head Start are based on the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood Pre-Kindergarten and include topics and content that help lay this foundation for STEM abilities.

We appreciate the progress that has been made in providing 6,200 additional children to enroll in Pre-K Counts and Head Start over the past two years. We encourage you to continue to prioritize expanded access to high quality pre-k in your FY 2017-18 state budget proposal. Such investments are important to our future workforce and economic security.

Best regards,



**Chad Amond**  
President  
Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce



**George Book, Jr.**  
President & CEO  
West Shore Chamber of Commerce

/Steven Bradley/

**Steven Bradley**  
Chairman  
African American Chamber of Commerce PA-NJ-DE



**Michelle Crowley**  
President & CEO  
Greater Carlisle Chamber of Commerce



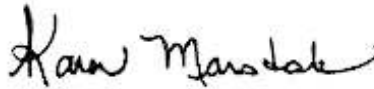
**Bernard Dagenais**  
President & CEO  
Main Line Chamber of Commerce



**Robert Durkin**  
President  
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce



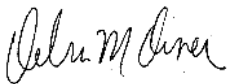
**Joe Hurd**  
President & CEO  
Blair County Chamber of Commerce



**Karen Marsdale**  
President & CEO  
Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce & Industry



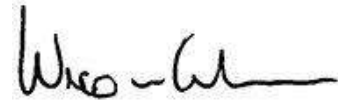
**Mike Ross**  
President  
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**Debra Orner**  
Vice President & Interim CEO  
Greater Johnstown/Cambria County Chamber of Commerce

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**Kevin Schreiber**  
President & CEO  
York County Economic Alliance



**Wico Van Genderen**  
President & CEO  
Greater Wikes-Barre Chamber of Commerce



**Rob Wonderling**  
President & CEO  
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