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Governor Wolf's Budget Goal: Create 'Strongest Workforce in the Nation'

Bold and sensible plan will rebuild Pennsylvania's economy and prioritize skills training from birth to retirement

Harrisburg, PA – With the commonwealth on a comeback, Governor Tom Wolf today outlined in his 2019-20 budget address a bold plan to move the commonwealth forward by building the strongest workforce in the nation that drives the strongest economy. With a comprehensive package of programs and an overhaul of policies, the Statewide Workforce, Education, and Accountability Program will provide opportunities for Pennsylvanians from birth to retirement.

“Today, I present a comprehensive plan to help grow our economy by continuing to invest in our workforce,” said Governor Wolf. “This plan calls on contributions from the business community, labor unions, educators, research institutions, students, parents, and adult workers. And it increases opportunity for every Pennsylvanian at every stage of life – from birth to retirement.

“The people of our commonwealth have proven that, despite the challenges we face, Pennsylvania remains a place worthy of its history – a place where people can find good work, strong communities, and opportunity for their kids. And, here in Harrisburg, we’ve proven that despite our differences, we remain capable of doing what Washington just cannot seem able to do: tackle big challenges, put aside petty partisanship, and serve the public interest.”

A core component of the governor’s plan is the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center, which brings together agency heads and public and private sector experts in a unique approach to finding solutions that connect skilled workers with good jobs that employers need today and in the future.

The governor’s budget expands access to early childhood education, increases investments in schools, and partners with the private sector to build on the PAsmart initiative, launched last year as a groundbreaking approach to workforce development.

Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center

Tackling the skills gap and creating a well-trained workforce requires government, schools and industry to work together. PAsmart was the first step, but Governor Wolf wants bolder action. Soon the governor will sign an executive order creating the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center. The departments of Community and Economic Development, Labor & Industry, State and others will partner with external leaders to find solutions that will strengthen our workforce.

“Across the commonwealth, we have workers aging out of our workforce, and too often the next generation of worker is not there or doesn’t have the skills to replace them,” said Governor Wolf. “If we can’t strengthen our workforce, we will fall behind. And we cannot let our government’s response to this problem be handcuffed by stale habit. The time is now for this comprehensive plan for preparing Pennsylvanians to compete and win in our rapidly changing economy.”

Early Childhood Development and Parent Support

Parents cannot work if they lack food, housing or childcare. To break the cycle of poverty, the governor’s budget invests in early childhood education and removes barriers for low-income parents. The proposal provides \$5 million to expand home-visiting programs for pregnant women and at-risk infants and toddlers, \$15 million in federal funds to reduce waiting lists for high-quality childcare, and \$5 million for wrap-around services so parents can attend college or other training to get skills for family-sustaining jobs.

Continuing Investments in Education and Career Training

The governor’s budget ensures that every student is ready for a career by continuing investments to improve public schools along with more funding for early childhood programs, k-through-12, and higher education. The budget provides increases of \$200 million for basic education, \$50 million for pre-k and Head Start, \$50 million for special education, \$7 million for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, and \$8 million in one-time grants for community college students or graduates who are working in Pennsylvania.

PAsmart is an innovative and pioneering approach to connecting Pennsylvanians with education and training opportunities, apprenticeships, and STEM careers and the governor’s budget expands this initiative with an additional \$4 million to help Pennsylvania manufacturers train workers and \$6 million to expand career and technical education for adults.

Governor Wolf is also proposing to save nearly \$120 million over the next two years by raising Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to \$12 an hour on July 1, 2019. The boost in pay for one million workers would enable tens of thousands of people to work their way off of public assistance, reducing the burden on taxpayers who are subsidizing low wages.

To prevent students from falling behind, the governor’s plan lowers the age when students must start attending school from 8 to 6 and increases the dropout age from 17 to 18. The administration will also study the benefits of providing free full day kindergarten to all children starting at age 5.

The transcript of the budget address as prepared is available [here](#).

Pennsylvanians can find out more about Governor Wolf’s budget at budget.pa.gov.

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