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February 19, 2019

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Governor Wolf Creates Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf is taking significant action to strengthen Pennsylvania’s workforce. Today, the governor signed an executive order to create the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center. The command center will expand the collaboration between government and the private sector to address the skills gap and worker shortages.

The governor was joined by commonwealth, legislative, labor, and business leaders for the signing in the state Capitol Rotunda.

“Our commonwealth is on the comeback and more people are working than ever before,” said Governor Wolf. “Businesses are hiring and cannot find the trained workers to fill open jobs. And too many people are stuck in low-wage jobs without the training to advance.

“Our economy is transitioning and it’s a race to keep up. We either strengthen workforce development or we risk falling behind. We must be bold and ambitious and break from the status quo.”

The governor appointed three leaders from the private sector and three cabinet secretaries to lead the command center. They are:

- Gene Barr, president and CEO of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry
- Tony Bartolomeo, co-chair of Team Pennsylvania
- Rick Bloomingdale, president of the AFL-CIO
- Acting Secretary Kathy Boockvar, Department of State
- Secretary Dennis Davin, Department of Community and Economic Development
- Secretary Jerry Oleksiak, Department of Labor & Industry

Governor Wolf wants Pennsylvania to build the strongest workforce in the nation. To advance that effort, the command center will address workforce shortages to help Pennsylvania compete. It will recommend ways to better coordinate workforce and economic development

programs across state agencies and identify barriers that may prevent someone from working or prevent businesses from hiring skilled workers.

Examples include lack of child care or transportation, as well as outdated professional licensure, certification and continuing education requirements. The command center will also review the recommendations of the Auditor General and implement those that will deliver the best results.

Finally, it will monitor implementation and progress of the various workforce and education proposals outlined in the governor's [Statewide Workforce, Education, and Accountability Program \(SWEAP\)](#) proposal to hold the commonwealth, and our private partners, accountable in strengthening our workforce and making Pennsylvania a better place to live and work.

"The jobs skill gap is a growing concern among the Commonwealth's employers – as evidenced in the PA Chamber's 28th Economic Survey in which, for the first time ever, job creators listed difficulties finding skilled and qualified employees to fill open positions as the biggest problem facing their companies," said PA Chamber of Business and Industry President and CEO Gene Barr. "We're pleased to join with the Wolf administration, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle, and our partners in the education and labor communities to address this issue in order to ensure that Pennsylvania's workforce is prepared to meet the needs of the evolving jobs market."

"The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO is honored to take part in establishing Governor Wolf's Workforce Command Center," said Pennsylvania AFL-CIO President Rick Bloomingdale. "We know that the future of work in our commonwealth depends on investing in the working people across Pennsylvania. Workforce development programs that train and support workers in their careers, and not just meet the needs of employers, move Pennsylvania forward in attracting the jobs of the future."

"I look forward to getting to work with the administration and the other members of the command center on addressing the workforce challenges of the commonwealth by bringing together the public and private sectors and identifying efficient, employer-focused solutions," said Anthony Bartolomeo, Team Pennsylvania co-chair and president and CEO of Pennoni Associates, Inc.

House Democratic Leader Frank Dermody added, "Our state government and employers in the private and public sectors are working together to knock down barriers and get people into jobs. This is a serious effort to develop and match the skills of Pennsylvania workers to today's jobs."

SWEAP, unveiled with the governor's budget proposal, builds on the success of PAsmart to create opportunities for Pennsylvanians from birth to retirement. The bold plan expands early childhood development programs, increases investments in schools and educators, and partners with the private sector to build on the groundbreaking PAsmart initiative.

"We see companies across industries that say they need more of the right people in the pipeline for careers now and in the very near future," said Jessica Trybus, a member of the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board and Founder and Chief Games Officer of Simcoach Games, a company that uses video games to inspire youth to careers. "We need to empower people to know what the jobs are, envision themselves in those environments, then show them how to get there."

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