

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

September 17, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment was held on September 17, 2026, at 9:00 AM ET/ 8:00 AM CT in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Josh Branscum, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Josh Branscum, Co-Chair; Senator Phillip Wheeler, Co-Chair; Senators Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Rick Girdler, Jason Howell, Scott Madon, Matt Nunn, and Mike Wilson; and Representatives Adam Bowling, Josh Bray, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Al Gentry, Thomas Huff, Kevin Jackson, Kim King, Nima Kulkarni, Matt Lockett, J.T. Payne, and Scott Sharp.

Guests: Kate Shanks, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce; Charles Aull, Vice President, Policy, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce; Michael Gritton, Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks; and Myra Wilson, Executive Director, Cumberland Workforce Development Board.

LRC Staff: Peter Wright, Janine Coy, Christian Deeter, and Samantha Gerhart.

Approval of Minutes of August 27, 2026 Meeting

A motion was made by Senator Girdler and seconded by Representative Lockett, to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Housing Report

Charles Aull, Vice President, Policy, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and Kate Shanks, Senior Vice President, Public Affairs, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, previewed a new in-depth study that examined housing challenges and specific recommendations leading into the 2027 legislative session. Mr. Aull explained key findings of the report and its differences compared to their 2024 report.

In response to Chair Branscum, Mr. Aull discussed how the estimated number of housing shortages has not been updated since the 2024 report and the assumption we are operating at a similar level. Ms. Shanks explained how the cost of housing in relation to income is not specifically a Kentucky issue, but a national one.

In response to Co-Chair Wheeler, Ms. Shanks explained that some communities are in a unique and competitive position because they can accommodate job demands with housing they already have.

In response to Representative Gentry, Mr. Aull discussed how there are new market forces, but they are not big enough to compete with the dramatic slowdown in home building.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. Aull explained how there would still be a housing shortage even if we had continued building homes at the same rate we were before the Great Recession. Ms. Shanks discussed how vacancy rates have led to an imbalance of supply and demand.

In response to Representative Kulkarni, Ms. Shanks stated that safety is critical and believes the building of data centers would not impact housing but would support unique trade needs.

In response to Representative Lockett, Mr. Aull described how inflation has increased the price of housing because there is an insufficient supply and how it needs to be easier to build starter homes for first-time homebuyers.

In response to Representative Payne, Mr. Aull identified Indiana as a good model for residential infrastructure.

In response to Senator Madon, Ms. Shanks explained that less than 1% of housing availability is used as an Airbnb but did not identify it as a reason for the challenges the report examined.

Putting Young Kentuckians to Work: Update

Michael Gritton, Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks, and Myra Wilson, Executive Director, Cumberland Workforce Development Board, provided a second-year update on the Putting Young Kentuckians to Work program. Ms. Wilson discussed how government funding has directly expanded the capacity of local workforce development boards.

In response to Chair Branscum, Mr. Gritton explained how getting connected to high schools and high school seniors has been the biggest challenge since starting the program.

In response to Representative Gentry, Mr. Gritton described how there is no duplication, and each workforce development board addresses the needs within the community.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Wilson stated the need for policies that allow teens to participate in the workforce.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.