

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2024 Interim

November 19, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment was held on November 19, 2024, at 9:00 AM 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 Max Wise, Co-Chair; Senators Gary Boswell, Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Jason Howell, Robby Mills, Reginald Thomas, Phillip Wheeler, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Shane Baker, Jared Bauman, Adrielle Camuel, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Al Gentry, Peyton Griffiee, Thomas Huff, Kevin Jackson, Kim King, Matt Lockett, Scott Sharp, and Ashley Tackett Laferty.

Guests: Michael Gritton, Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks; Myra Wilson, Director, Cumberland Workforce Development Board; Richard Vincent, Executive Vice President, Associated General Contractors of Kentucky; Venkata (Vijay) Kamineni, CEO, Metals Innovation Initiative (MI2); Frank Jemley, President and CEO, Kentucky Association of Manufacturers; Aaron Poynter, Director, Reentry and Employment Services Branch, Kentucky Office of Adult Education; Mike Uptegraff, Senior Coordinator, Reentry and Employment Services Branch, Kentucky Office of Adult Education.

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Christian Deeter, Austin Johnson, Matissa Robinson, and Sasche Allen.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 24, 2024, meeting was made by Chairman Wise, seconded by Representative Lockett, and approved by voice vote.

Putting Young Kentuckians to Work

Michael Gritton, Executive Director of KentuckianaWorks, and Myra Wilson, Director of Cumberland Workforce Development Board, focused on a two year, \$20 million statewide initiative aiming to improve employment opportunities for Kentuckians aged 16 to 24. This program, supported by HB 1 from the 2024 legislative session, seeks to address workforce

gaps and enhance economic stability by providing services such as career exploration, employer outreach, job placement assistance, on-the-job training, short-term occupational skills training, and other support services. The program emphasizes helping young adults secure full-time jobs with livable wages, with the goal of meeting employer needs and boosting local economies across the state. There are plans for an expansion of opportunities, increased access to training and support, partnerships with employers, a focus on long-term impact, and continued collaboration with the state.

Answering questions from Chairman Branscum, Mr. Gritton and Ms. Wilson described strategies as well as barriers for youth outreach in their respective areas.

Responding to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Wilson confirmed the program is available in all 120 counties, including private schools. Services are discussed with students individually with the assistance of school counselors and staff. There is not currently an online portal to access program services, but Mr. Gritton stated this may be due to a lack of data sharing agreements with schools.

Addressing questions from Representative King, Ms. Wilson reiterated the initiative is open to youth aged 16 to 24. She described outreach efforts for individuals that are no longer in high school that included social media marketing and information on workforce boards' websites.

Replying to Representative Bauman's inquiry regarding Putting Young Kentuckians to Work's CDL program, Mr. Gritton stated he was unsure if it was available at all 18 Kentucky Community and Technical College System locations and discussed barriers to such programs, including capacity limitations. Ms. Wilson said workforce boards maintain CDL training provider lists for interested parties. Addressing a follow up question, Mr. Gritton made comments regarding information technology training and said his workforce board offers related programs. However, most programming is offered in the healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and hospitality sectors.

Answering a question from Representative Tackett Laferty, Ms. Wilson said workforce boards have been contacting schools directly to begin a line of communication.

Responding to Senator Boswell, Ms. Wilson stated working with programs like Putting Kentuckians First enables workforce boards to perform outreach to those that are justice involved. Mr. Gritton detailed KentuckianaWorks' partnership with Goodwill Industries and spoke about the Young Adult Opportunity Center.

Addressing a question from Senator Howell, Mr. Gritton confirmed KentuckianaWorks is making efforts to establish data sharing agreements with Jefferson County Public Schools.

Update on Kentucky Manufacturing and Construction Industries

Richard Vincent, Executive Vice President of Associated General Contractors of Kentucky, Venkata (Vijay) Kamineni, CEO of Metals Innovation Initiative (MI2), and Frank Jemley, President and CEO of Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (KAM), highlighted key developments and challenges in the manufacturing and construction sectors. The Commonwealth's manufacturing industry has become a cornerstone in the state's economy, employing over 250,000 people and accounting for 13 percent of the state's workforce, which is significantly higher than the national average. The state's central location offers a logistical advantage, with proximity to two-thirds of the U.S. population, which makes Kentucky an ideal hub for manufacturing and distribution. The state's focus on sectors like electric vehicle production was also discussed. The electric vehicle production sector has received \$11.6 billion in recent investments and created over 10,000 full-time jobs. Additionally, the construction industry has made significant improvements to vital infrastructure and workforce development and is addressing the shortage of skilled labor. Efforts such as dedicated apprenticeships and trade training programs aim to attract and retain talent in the face of growing demands in residential and commercial construction. Presenters acknowledged challenges with workforce shortages and the need for increased educational outreach to fill high-skill roles. Programs such as Kentucky Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (KY FAME) and Work Ready Communities are designed to address these gaps. Ultimately, the Commonwealth is leveraging its strong manufacturing base and strategic location to sustain growth while addressing workforce and infrastructure needs to meet future industry demands.

Addressing an inquiry from Representative Jackson, presenters said they were unaware of the number of immigrants employed in their respective industries.

After Senator Mills made remarks pertaining to energy capacity, Mr. Jemley expressed KAM's support of SB 349, which passed during the 2024 legislative session relating to energy policy. He discussed the organization's participation in a routine energy roundtable with interested stakeholders.

Replying to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. Kamineni emphasized the importance of leveraging the state's strengths in advanced manufacturing and the metals industry to remain competitive globally. Mr. Jemley discussed the need for innovation in manufacturing and growing industrial capacity. Mr. Vincent highlighted the importance of apprenticeship programs, partnerships with educational institutions, and increased public and private investment.

Answering a question from Representative Camuel, Mr. Jemley said factors contributing to high turnover rates in the manufacturing industry are unknown. However, he speculated

wages, child care, and transportation are key issues affecting workforce.

Putting Kentuckians First

Aaron Poynter, Director of the Reentry and Employment Services Branch of the Kentucky Office of Adult Education, and Mike Uptegraff, Senior Coordinator with the Reentry and Employment Services Branch, highlighted an initiative that aims to enhance workforce participation, particularly for justice-involved individuals. The Putting Kentuckians First program seeks to dismantle employment barriers through a multifaceted support system, providing resources like education, vocational training, recovery assistance, and employment opportunities. Key elements include collaborative resource alignment through partnerships with judicial systems, local organizations, and employers to ensure seamless reentry into the workforce. The program includes targeted services that focus on pre-release education and preparation in correctional facilities, followed by vigorous support post-release, including access to certifications and job training. Adult education centers act as a resource for participants and talent pipelines for employers. There is an emphasis on accountability and skill building to promote self sufficiency and long term success. Putting Kentuckians First underscores the importance of integrating social services, workforce systems, and judicial supports to create sustainable opportunities for justice-involved individuals while meeting local and state economic goals.

Answering a question from Senator Mills, Mr. Poynter confirmed the personal identification services for individuals participating in a credentialed training program, adult education program, or work-release program are provided at no cost to the individual and paid for through the Office of Adult Education.

Responding to Representative Duvall, Mr. Poynter stated program participants are 30 percent less likely to reoffend compared to nonprogram participants. Mr. Uptegraff discussed the importance of maintaining stability for justice-involved individuals.

Addressing questions from Senator Wilson, Mr. Poynter discussed housing as a barrier to gainful employment and said using a county specific approach allows Putting Kentuckians First to identify opportunities for transitional housing. He also elaborated on collaboration with substance use and mental health providers.

Replying to Senator Boswell, Mr. Poynter spoke about identifying root causes of drug use through effective partnerships with employers and program participants and utilization of substance use, behavioral health, and mental health supports.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.