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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

*House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing*

Preparing Pennsylvanians: How Colleges Fill In-Demand Careers

Wednesday, October 20, 2021 | 10:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.

Representatives Bridget Kosierowski & Kyle Mullins

10:00am

Dr Jill Murray, President  
Lackawanna College

*Q & A with Legislators*

10:30am

Melissa Turlip, Director of Programming  
Community Foundation of the Endless Mountains

*Q & A with Legislators*

11:00 am

Colin Furneaux, Educational Coordinator  
Northern Tier Industry and Education Consortium

*Q & A with Legislators*

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

October 20, 2021 Testimony Talking Points  
Lackawanna College  
President Jill A. Murray, Ph.D.

As the President of Lackawanna College, I've spent a lot of time thinking about how we can best serve the higher education needs of Northeast Pennsylvania's prospective college students, and what I have come to clearly understand is that starting the conversation about college a few months before high school graduation is more often than not much too late. We know for sure that the pandemic has promoted a great reassessment about the value of higher education among students and their families (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021). We also know that our K-12 systems across the Commonwealth were overwhelmed even BEFORE the pandemic. During the past two years, the strain on our K-12 system has become even greater as students and families work to overcome the staggering social, emotional, and academic aftermaths of the COVID 19 pandemic and interrupted education. K-12 systems need help in their quest to meaningfully and individually prepare students for higher education. Institutions like Lackawanna College are immersed in partnerships and innovative programming to help address this challenge.

The price of a college education is now at the forefront of the consumer mind as choices about college are made. Why? In roughly half of our 50 states, more than 50% of K-12 students come from families making less than \$40k annually. Locally, the Scranton School District reports an over 80% poverty rate with 54 languages spoken. A recent study by the Niche Survey found that students are automatically eliminating colleges from their search based solely on sticker price and that \$30k per year would be too much to consider (The Niche Survey, 2021). These are staggering statistics and ones that deserve much conversation.

At Lackawanna College, we provide a quality education at an affordable price (\$15,300 for a FT student) that prepares our students for family-sustaining jobs. When we see students encountering barriers to degree attainment, we dream big, because access to a Lackawanna College education is be life-changing. Today I'm going to speak to you about the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program, also known as EITC, because through this program, Lackawanna has changed the lives of high school students in our region by starting those college conversations earlier and providing a deeper level of knowledge about how to navigate the complex and dynamic world of higher education bureaucracy... and we're just getting started.

The EITC program enables innovative programming that augments what K-12 systems have the capacity to provide. In a nutshell, the EITC program provides tax credits to businesses for their contributions to nonprofits, which use the funds to provide educational services for the benefit of public school students. Lackawanna College is one of these "Educational Improvement Organizations" and we receive EITC funding from generous business partners that can be used to provide educational programming, such as Dual Enrollment, which gives high school students the opportunity to earn college credits while still attending high school for a fraction of the price. Many colleges and universities offer dual enrollment, but as the price of a college education continued to climb nationally, my team at Lackawanna knew we had to do more – so we created Level Up, an innovative, next-level dual enrollment program for high school juniors and seniors that links students to career pathways in high priority fields while also fostering their personal

development. Level Up offers students the opportunity to earn college-level credits towards completing an associate's degree or certificate at the reduced rate of \$100 per credit. Level Up also includes advising, mentoring, and support services to help participants become comfortable as savvy, prepared college students ready to make the most of their experience. Our Level Up students who complete degrees walk at Lackawanna's graduation before they attend their high school graduation. Upon completion, students can transfer credits to another college or university, and if they stay with us they qualify for an additional incentive scholarship. Level Up drastically reduces the cost of a college education and cuts down on the time it takes students to attain their degree. The EITC program is incredibly important and impactful because even a \$100 a credit is beyond the reach of some students and families; EITC funding allowed us to level the playing field and offer access to our program to motivated, academically promising students who lack the financial resources to pursue the program without assistance.

I don't think it will surprise you to hear that Level Up has gotten some attention. Since first introduced in 2018, Level Up has graduated 49 students, with 25 earning an associate degree and 24 earning a certificate. This year, Level Up received international attention when Fast Company, a globally recognized business journal, named Lackawanna College as one of the 2021 World's Most Innovative Companies. The Level Up Program earned Lackawanna 9<sup>th</sup> place in the Corporate Social Responsibility Category. The need for Level Up and dual enrollment opportunities has been demonstrated by the enthusiasm of our partner school districts. To date, over 50 school districts offer their high school students access to either or both of Lackawanna's Dual Enrollment and Level Up Programs. School districts see the value of these career-focused college access points, so much so that some schools have even sought out and secured private funding streams that provide scholarships for their students who wish to attend these programs. Local schools have partnered with the Community Foundation of the Endless Mountains to reduce the cost of this low-tuition program, ensuring its affordable for all interested students regardless of their household income or socioeconomic status. The Foundation has already fully funded a Level Up student with EITC support who earned his associate's degree in Business Administration and went on to take on a managerial and financial role at his family's business. We want higher education outcomes like that to be attainable for all students, which is why I am thrilled to share that in 2022, Lackawanna will be eligible for these EITC dollars to directly support our Dual Enrollment and Level Up Programs.

This isn't the first time that Lackawanna has leveraged EITC to help students start their postsecondary journey while still in high school. Four years ago, Lackawanna's School of Petroleum and Natural Gas introduced *The Pipeline Program*, which offers Elk Lake High School students the opportunity to attend Lackawanna's "Introduction to Petroleum and Natural Gas" course at the Susquehanna CTC. The Pipeline Program enrolls up to 10 students per year and awards completers three college credits free of charge thanks to EITC funding provided by Coterra Energy (formally known as Cabot Oil & Gas). Since initiated, half of the students who attended the Pipeline Program's free class have gone on to enroll in our Petroleum and Natural Gas degree programs which prepare them for well-paying jobs in our regional oil and gas industry. EITC has made this dual enrollment program possible, and even more exciting, is that this combining of EITC funds to support dual enrollment is a replicable model. Already, Lackawanna has potential programs in the works for other high priority fields such as an

Electricity training program for high school students, and we're looking forward to unveiling new programs that prepare students for today's technology-driven workplace.

# Preparing Pennsylvanians: How Community Colleges Fill In-Demand Careers

October 20, 2021 10am

Testimony provided by:

Melissa Turlip

Director of Programming

Commonwealth Charitable Management

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to discuss the EITC program and our role as an administrator for this effort to provide educational opportunities to students that are not available as part of the traditional classroom instruction.

I am the Director of Programming for Commonwealth Charitable Management based in Montrose, Pennsylvania, and we administer preschool and kindergarten through twelfth grade scholarships as well as Educational Improvement program funding across the state. Our role is to ensure that eligible students receive much-needed scholarship funds to support their chosen educational path and enable schools and organizations to supplement their curriculum with exciting and engaging programming that extends beyond traditional school coursework.

In 2020, Commonwealth Charitable Management provided Educational Improvement programs to nearly 80 schools and organizations statewide, and over 1,700 students received the financial assistance needed to earn dual enrollment and advanced placement college credit. Our Educational Improvement programs provided content ranging from financial literacy, to early literacy to engineering and technology-based courses. We also provided nearly 2,000 scholarships for students enrolled in quality preschool programs, private schools and Career and Technology Centers.

Through our partnerships with our Career and Technology Centers, we have helped thousands of students offset their out of pocket expenses to participate in their chosen field of study. So often, students choose not to attend a program at their Career and Technology Center because of the costs associated with participating in the program. For example, a cosmetology kit for a first-year student costs approximately \$500. This may be out of reach for some students, and they may choose to stay enrolled in their local high school instead of going to the career center to gain valuable experience in the career of their dreams. A counselor at a Career and Technology Center shared this note: "Every year, I end up talking with parents about the upfront costs associated with going into certain programs. Sometimes that financial strain can be the difference between a student coming to our school and learning a trade or staying back at their sending schools. Without that financial roadblock, struggling families can now send their students to our school without the concern of added debt." The scholarship funding provided to students attending Career and Technology Centers gives students the much-needed equipment and tools to ensure they are successful during their time in school and as they start their career after graduation.

Commonwealth Charitable Management also provides scholarships to eligible students attending private schools, and in 2020, nearly 700 students received scholarships totaling just under \$700,000.00. These scholarships make private school education affordable for families of children in grades kindergarten through twelve. In addition, Commonwealth Charitable Management provided over \$300,000 in scholarship funding to close to 400 families to help offset the costs of preschool. Children enrolled in quality preschool programs are better prepared for school, and helping families afford preschool through the EITC program helps children gain the necessary skills to be successful in kindergarten. In an online article posted by healthline.com in September 2019 entitled "Is Preschool Really Worth It? New Research Says Yes", it states, "Children who attend quality preschools display greater self-regulatory behavior and academic skills than their counterparts who don't attend preschool." This finding comes as a result of a longitudinal study following 466 low-income, racially and ethnically diverse preschool children over a span of 10 years from preschool through the start of high school. Further, Tara Phebus, Executive Director of the Nevada Institute for Children's Research states,

“Some of the most widely cited benefits to preschool include increased vocabulary and other pre-literacy skills as well as the development of pre-math skills like counting, sorting and recognizing patterns”, noting this is in addition to the social and emotional benefits that occur.

Our Educational Improvement programs impact thousands of students with opportunities to participate in hands-on activities and coursework that is beyond the traditional school curriculum. With these funds, schools are able to offer new programs with exciting and engaging educational content that they would not be able to provide without these funds. For example, as part of our Technology and the Arts program, students can learn about and experiment with 3D printing. This course can offer hundreds of students valuable experience in the use of this technology. Oftentimes, expanding on technology-based programs is not part of a school budget, and securing the financial resources can be challenging, especially for smaller schools. However, this type of programming is what our schools and students are seeking to help prepare them for careers of the future. Additionally, students participating in dual enrollment courses currently funded through Educational Improvement, develop an understanding of what college coursework will be like before making the investment in enrolling full time at a college. They are able to earn credits to transfer to their chosen college, therefore lessening their financial burden and providing them with the opportunity to complete their degree in less time than a student that did not participate in dual enrollment.

We have received an increase in requests from public schools and local organizations for our innovative educational programs that fall under the Educational Improvement umbrella. Approval for these tax credits is increasingly competitive for businesses seeking to enter into the EITC program, and yet can have the greatest impact when it comes to the number of students benefitting from the funding. Increases in Educational Improvement funding would allow our schools and organizations to continue to offer innovative curriculum for students and provide them with the education and experience needed for the workforce.

We have also experienced an increase in the number of schools seeking to aid students that wish to participate in dual enrollment courses. Students, educators and parents see the value of dual enrollment courses as a way to sample college coursework without the commitment to full time enrollment. Currently, funding for dual enrollment falls under the umbrella of Educational Improvement. However, the greatest increases to the EITC program in recent years have been for scholarships. Scholarships are provided to low to moderate income families as defined by the Department of Community and Economic Development, and documentation is secured to ensure the families qualify under the established guidelines. With dual enrollment programs falling under Educational Improvement, there is no way to ensure that the funding is supporting low to moderate income families. By moving the dual enrollment program to the scholarship umbrella of EITC, more funding for the highly competitive Educational Improvement program would be available for our schools and organizations to offer other innovative and career supporting programming. It would also ensure that students receiving the scholarships for dual enrollment are qualified under the eligibility guidelines provided by DCED.

Commonwealth Charitable Management is grateful for the opportunity to share our successes with the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program. We are collaborating with hundreds of schools and organizations in support of students across the Commonwealth to provide programs and scholarships

that impact thousands of lives each year. This program has proved to be invaluable to each and every student, family, school and organization that benefits from these funds.

October 20, 2021

Good afternoon, my name is Colin Furneaux, and I am one of 4 Educational Coordinators at the Northern Tier Industrial & Education Consortium (NTIEC) and we are a non-profit organization that has served students and school districts, across the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania. On behalf of our Board of Directors, our Executive Director and all of our employees I am honored to testify here today. As a former teacher, principal, central office administrator, and Intermediate Unit Director of Curriculum I offer my testimony as an advocate for strong Career Education, in the form of “Work Based” learning (school to work, career learning, apprenticeships, job shadows, paid and unpaid internships, externships, career mentoring...).

NTIEC has been working to provide high quality “Work Based” learning activities and “Career Education” services to students and schools across the region, since 1993. We are a small non-profit organization that is located in Susquehanna County. Our services to students and school districts includes career education, job shadowing, paid and unpaid internships, youth apprenticeships, externships and program support all listed Work Based Learning. We believe that students must can learn from people on the job, in the workplace, to be better prepared to make quality choices about their future. We also believe that “Work Based” learning is a strong way to develop our regional workforce.

The need for “Work Based” learning is stronger than ever and we hear that every day from our 300+ employer partners. NTIEC uses EITC funding, as an approved EIO, to strengthen and deliver our programming

to students in a very rural region of the state. Our cost effective programming relies on our ability to maintain and serve a wide variety of employers and professional contacts. In fact, the economic metrics of our region rely heavily on small to medium sized employers. Large employers are rare in our region. We are fortunate enough to have a few large employers who value our mission. EITC funding allows NTIEC Educational Coordinators that support local school districts as they work to implement 339 plans, document college and career ready artifacts for PIMS reporting and implement alternative pathways for high school graduation, as per Act 158. They are doing this in-person work within school districts where students have no access to Cooperative Education, and/or limited access to CTC programs, NTIEC is providing the only access to structures “Work Based” learning for students. In districts where students have access to CTC programs, NTIEC is providing an alternative to multi-year career preparation.

Supporting EITC funding looks like:

**K-12 Career Awareness Programing** --NTIEC career programs served 2,257 students engaged 239 workplace employees in face-to-face career focused student interactions:

- Worksite tours for 34 students with 2 employers and 1 school
- Safety City with Claverack REC for 503 students, 2 employers at 6 schools
- Healthcare externships with 46 students, 3 employers and 13 schools
- Healthcare career events with 327 students, 34 employers & mentors and 11 schools
- Healthcare career experience for 15 students, 6 employers and 2 teachers

- Energy & oilfield career experience for 10 students and 3 employers
- Dental externship for 2 students with 1 employer at 2 schools.
- Healthcare lecture series for 68 students, 6 employers at 2 schools
- Non-healthcare lecture series for 249 students, 7 employers at 3 schools
- Job shadowing experiences for 25 students, 13 employers and 8 schools
- STEM career program with 19 students, 1 employer and 1 school
- Career cluster events with 366 students, 42 employers and 1 school
- Pre-graduation prep class for 290 students at 1 school.
- Girls in science program for 9 students, 9 employers and 2 schools.
- Virtual career pathway presentations for 39 students at 1 school
- Internships and apprenticeships for 131 students with 104 employers at 11 schools

### **School Districts and County:**

Blue Ridge -Susquehanna

Elk Lake -Susquehanna & Wyoming

Endless Mountains Christian Academy - Wyoming

Faith Mountain Christian Academy - Susquehanna

Hazleton Academy of the Sciences - Luzerne

Lackawanna Trail – Wyoming

Montrose -Susquehanna  
Mountain View -Susquehanna  
Tunkhannock Area -Wyoming  
Wyalusing – Bradford & Wyoming  
SCCTC - Susquehanna  
Southern Tioga -Tioga  
Towanda-Bradford  
Wellsboro –Tioga  
Northern Tioga – Tioga  
Athens – Bradford  
Troy – Bradford  
Susquehanna – Susquehanna  
Abington Heights – Lackawanna  
Northeast Bradford – Bradford

My testimony today also includes a few things that will help to insure access to an increasing variety of quality “Work Based” learning activities to students:

1. -continue funding at current levels to sustain this critical work force development work with high school students.

2. -increase funding to expand a network of employers who are willing to host Work Based Learning experiences for additional high school students.
3. -streamline qualification/participation paperwork to allow more small employers to participate.
- 4 -allow funding for Career Awareness Implementation Training for regional guidance counselors. How to work with partners to implement action items, within 339 Plans.

In closing, I hope my input has been helpful to your discussion, and I look forward to working with you as you address continued EITC funding and “Work Based” leaning. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.