Policy Brief /Statement

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**Title: Career Pathways: A Path for All**

**Written by: Career Pathways for All**

**Summary of Problem: Addressing the Needs of Labor Market**

* What is the problem
* Why does it matter
* What is the ask? What are you proposing?

The COVID epidemic has had a significant impact on our labor market. As individuals look to make changes into occupations with higher wages or more stability, research suggests that career pathways are a viable and sustainable solution for putting people back to work. In many ways modeled after the apprenticeship or work-based learning model, Career Pathways represent upward mobility and economic stability for Americans.

The public workforce development system is well positioned to address the labor supply and demand needs that have emerged as a result of the pandemic and into the post-recovery economic period. All stakeholders in the public workforce development system- employers, educators, workforce development boards, and participants- need to be aware of services and opportunities in order for Career Pathways to be successful. Additional education, awareness, and increased use of data is required in order to make Career Pathways have the significant impact on the labor market recovery as research suggests. Best practices exist in other states that can help guide Pennsylvania in making decisions.

**Key Messages**

* Utilize data to ensure equitable access to career pathways
* Scaling of evidence based models
* Increase funding opportunities to lower barriers to credentials and degrees

**Call to Action**

With consideration given to these new demands, and an eye towards communities of color who have been hardest hit by the pandemic, each stakeholder within the public space would be wise to assess the extent to which barriers to engaging individuals along a career pathway exist. To that end, stakeholders can consider:

**Workforce Development Boards**

* Through its Operator, ensure connections exist amongst stakeholders for seamless transition.
* Repurpose funding to support bridge or ramp programs/
* Take advantage of technical assistance and targeted grants offered by the Commonwealth.
* Seek to partner with other entities to address remote access within communities of color.
* Ensure board make up is as diverse as the community in which it serves.
* Review investment priorities and policies, strategic plans to eliminate barriers.
* Support stakeholders through investments and advocacy.
* Offer incentives to institutes of higher education and education providers to offer services and courses outside of traditional hours.
* Increase transparency within the career pathway system to help job seekers take advantage of resources available to build essential skills to supplement technical skill attainment.

**Education Providers**

* Re-align curriculum to ensure alignment with industry needs and create a continuous improvement process for evaluation of alignment.
* Review entrance requirements and assess if any are creating artificial barriers to developmental level courses that traditionally lead students to spending more money without a credential or certificate attainment.
* Expand access to concurrent enrollment pathways and youth apprenticeship in school districts with limited college participation.
* Grow apprenticeship opportunities for fast-growing professions with the necessary funding to support wages for employers
* Invest in the development and expansion of professional opportunities that build virtual environments conducive to collaboration and networking

**Employers**

* Engage with the career pathways system to communicate shifts in skill needs
* Review recruitment and onboarding processes
* Identify and communicate career paths to attract workers when unable to compete with new wage requirements/expectations