



**SPECIAL KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING
FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION
Thursday, September 22, 2023 – 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Via Google Meet**

Members Present: Jonathan Westbrook, Sarah Davasher-Wisdom, Mike Hesketh, Jennifer Lampton, Ann Thompson, Patricia Williams, Ty Richardson, Cornelius Cotton, Caitlin Blair, Rick Purdy

Staff: Michael Gritton, Alicia Pardo, Patrick Garvey, Sarah Ehresman, Lada Gasparac, Jaime Disney, Latricia Swope, Bryan Griffin

Quick Summary: Activities to Date with Other Nine Workforce Board Directors and Outreach to Date with State Legislators – Michael Gritton

Michael thanked everyone for joining the meeting. He stated that at the last meeting, the discussion revolved around communicating the board’s strategic vision by picking a topic and deep-diving into that topic. The priority topic we discussed was programming for the 12,000 disconnected young adults (16-24-year-olds who are not in school and not working) in the county and 77,000 disconnected young adults across the state. Michael will be testifying in front of the Joint Economic Development and Workforce Investment Committee of the state legislature along with two workforce colleagues, and a chunk of their testimony will focus on this topic.

Michael presented to the board members the PowerPoint presentation that will be shown to the state legislature and summarized what he will emphasize to the Committee. Michael talked about his coaching from Tara Johnson-Noem, Executive Director of the Northern Kentucky Area Development District, who helped him with the language of the presentation pertaining to turning nontaxpayers into taxpayers. He told the board members that he recently met with Senator Mike Wilson and Senator Max Wise, two legislative leaders in Frankfort. He also mentioned his meeting with Representative Jared Bauman, who represents a southwest Jefferson County district that includes parts of Pleasure Ridge Park and Valley Station. Michael pointed out that all three are interested in what they can do to address the state’s low labor force participation rate, and in learning more about KentuckianaWorks.

His co-presenters will be Myra Wilson, Director of Cumberland’s Workforce Development Board, and Dean McKay, Director of Organizational Development & Information Technology and Board Chair of Northern Kentucky. Unfortunately, Dean will have his Executive Director as a proxy, and he will read a 3-minute statement from Dean. Dean was a dislocated worker at one point in his life who was helped by the Kentucky Career Center to get his career back on track. He is now an HR Director at a company in Northern Kentucky.



Open Discussion: How Best to utilize Board Members who will Attend the Committee Hearing on September 28th in Frankfort – Jonathan Westbrook and ALL

Michael Gritton explained that the Committee Hearing has provided a 15-minute slot for them to present and 15 minutes for comments and questions. For the members who plan to attend the meeting, Michael highlighted that it would be helpful to be there early because there may be a chance to hobnob before taking a formal seat. He circled back to the members and asked for their expertise.

Jonathan Westbrook asked if a list could be provided of who is on the panel at the hearing on Thursday the 28th. He requested the talking points so the members could get aligned on it. He summarized that an investment from the state in our young adult work could be a potential mitigator to the many barriers that individuals face in gaining employment, and could make a huge difference as we try to address workforce, crime, education, and other challenges. Michael agreed with his assessment, and he encouraged the members to talk to at least one representative from the region and one not from the region if they get the chance to attend the hearing.

Jonathan asked if they received some traction at the hearing, and what are the board members asking for when it comes to funding and a funding mechanism. He expressed tailoring the message by each party, Democratic and/or Republican as well, and then opened the floor for discussion and questions.

Sarah Davasher-Wisdom commended Michael and his team for working through the presentation. She noted that the talking points will resonate with the dominant party being Republican. Representative Russell Weber, Chair of the Committee, led various discussions on getting people off of unemployment. Sarah suggested in addition to turning people into taxpayers, taking them off unemployment would also resonate. She pointed out that Representative Nima Kulkarni is an immigration attorney from the Louisville area and the degree that The Spot serves immigrants may be worth mentioning as well. Regarding Jonathan's question on tailoring the message by party, she stated that the workforce should not be a partisan issue and to keep that in mind moving forward. Sarah advised to gain knowledge from Representative Weber and potentially have him visit The Spot. Once KentuckianaWorks knows the ask, she stated it would be beneficial to work with the Governor and Chairman Petrie on an actual request. It is not wise to do the presentation and not have a request in, with the Governor unveiling his budget priorities and the House of Representatives working on their budget as we speak.

Michael mentioned that he and his colleagues had been working with State Representative Josh Branscum from Campbellsville, and Representative Branscum had been clear in his advice about getting with the Appropriations Committee as soon as they could. Because Jason Petrie is the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Michael was open to advice on how to approach that discussion. Sarah suggested that if it came from Russell Weber after he toured The Spot, that would be most helpful.



Rick Purdy asked if there were difficult questions that would potentially come up at the hearing. Michael talked about the overlap between what he and his colleagues are requesting – funding that can in part be used to help high school seniors transition successfully to work – and work the Governor’s office has been doing under the Everybody Counts program. There is some overlap there Jonathan referred to Sarah Ehreshman and asked her about the likely Return on Investment (ROI) we can describe to the state if they invest in this population. Sarah Ehresman mentioned that the most recent return on investment (ROI) framework for investing in disconnected young adults from 2012 says that if you are effective for just 10% of the participants that you serve, you are expected to see a positive return on investment. So, it’s clear that an investment in this population would be likely to create a major ROI for the state over time. Michael reaffirmed that and will have all of the recommended information sent out to the board members by the following Tuesday.

Jonathan thanked Michael and the team. He opened the meeting to any suggestions to help get ready for the Committee Meeting. Without further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.