TO: The Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania Senate

FROM: Alex Halper, Director, Government Affairs

DATE: June 27, 2019

RE: Support S.B. 89

I write to urge your support for S.B. 89, which would replace the term “vocational-technical school” with “career and technical school” in the school code, and was amended in the House to include authorization for a promising Schools-to-Work pre-apprenticeship program. We understand S.B. 89 may come up for a concurrence vote this week.

The PA Chamber’s annual economic survey asks employers to name the single most important issue facing their business today. Last year, for the first time ever, the top answer was not taxes, healthcare costs or the economy; it was their inability to find qualified employees. Addressing this challenge is the PA Chamber’s top priority and our workforce development policy statement calls for proven strategies to increase the workforce pipeline for all employers; tailoring programs to the current and long-term workforce needs of local employers; and expanding and improving technical education.

Legislation encouraging pre-apprenticeship is consistent with these objectives. Based on a successful model spearheaded by the Hanover Chamber of Commerce, the Schools-to-Work program will support pre-apprenticeship partnerships between schools and local employers to help prepare students for quality jobs in their community and help employers address workforce needs.

As noted, S.B. 89 would also replace the term “vocational-technical school” with “career and technical school” when referenced in the school code. This has merit as well and is consistent with efforts to eliminate the stigma and perceived educational bias against vocational education programs.

We urge you to support this legislation. Please contact Alex Halper at ahalper@pachamber.org or 717-720-5471 with any questions or to discuss.