TO: The Honorable Members of the PA House of Representatives
FROM: Alex Halper, Director, Government Affairs
DATE: June 24, 2019
RE: Support H.B. 796 and S.B. 89 – Schools-to-Work Program

I write to urge your support for S.B. 89, which was amended last week to include the Schools-to-Work program as proposed in H.B. 796. We understand S.B. 89 or H.B. 796 may come up soon.

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-terms workforce needs of local employers; and expanding and improving technical education.

This legislation is consistent with each of these objectives. The bill establishes the Schools-to-Work program, which will support pre-apprenticeship partnerships between schools and local employers. Based on a successful model spearheaded by the Hanover Chamber of Commerce, these programs bring together the education and businesses communities to help prepare students for quality jobs in their community and help employers address workforce needs.

S.B. 89 as introduced would replace the term “vocational-technical school” with “career and technical school” when referenced in the school ode. This has merit as well and is consistent with efforts to eliminate the 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.