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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Labor & Industry Highlights Wolf Administration's \$40 Million PAsmart Investment in Pennsylvania Workforce Development**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Jennifer Berrier today joined workforce development professionals to celebrate the achievements of Governor Tom Wolf's [PAsmart initiative](#), through which the commonwealth has invested more than \$40 million since 2018 to enhance opportunities for Pennsylvania workers through apprenticeship programs and to strengthen Pennsylvania's overall economy through industry partnerships.

"When the Wolf Administration launched the PAsmart initiative in 2018, it was our goal to dismantle barriers separating Pennsylvania workers from in-demand job skills and family-sustaining wages. We did not know that a pandemic would upend the global economy just a few years later – creating even more urgency to identify and implement solutions," Berrier said. "This work is even more important today than it was when the PAsmart initiative began. The challenges of our economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic are significant, but Pennsylvania is overcoming those challenges because we have invested in collaboration across the commonwealth to build innovative apprenticeship programs and strengthen partnerships among industry leaders."

Governor Wolf launched PAsmart to help Pennsylvanians develop skills and abilities they need to obtain a quality job, help businesses recruit skilled workers, and foster economic growth. Since 2018, L&I has administered competitive grants to achieve these goals -- nearly \$28 million for registered apprenticeship (RA) programs and nearly \$13 million for industry partnerships. This includes the administration's most recent [investment of nearly \\$5 million in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs specifically for the commonwealth's building and construction trades to develop diverse talent pipelines and reach underrepresented populations](#).

In April 2022, [L&I announced \\$11 million in grant funding to Pennsylvania apprenticeship programs](#) – including \$485,000 to the Keystone Development Partnership (KDP) for its statewide RA Navigator apprenticeship program that trains people to start and manage apprenticeship programs. Developed with a goal to help rapidly expand apprenticeship throughout the commonwealth, the program has trained more than 50 Navigators to date. With additional support from PAsmart, KDP will train an additional 46 RA Navigators from across the commonwealth between 2022 and 2024.

"Apprenticeship programs have enormous potential to benefit both workers and employers." says John Tkach, executive director of KDP. "What's needed to unlock this potential are more people with an understanding of apprenticeships and how to implement them. These skills are what the Navigator apprenticeship program teaches."

In December 2021, L&I announced nearly \$4.8 million in PAsmart Industry Partnership Grants distributed among 26 recipients with innovative plans to meet local and regional workforce needs – including \$200,000 awarded to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Manufacturing Alliance (SEPMA) for recruitment, training, developing a pipeline of diverse workers, and workshops for business growth activities.

“The PAsmart grant award has both sustained and strengthened the SEPMA Partnership, seeing us through some of the most challenging economic times in our nation’s history,” said Barbara Stanford-Allen, project manager for SEPMA. “Through the worst of the pandemic, employer partners, affiliates, and members were able to work collaboratively and take a proactive approach to address talent development, business growth, and training from a recovery lens. The investment from the commonwealth allowed businesses to convene at an industry level and strategically identify the best course of actions to position and prepare our regional manufacturing sector for the future of work.”

Strengthening job and skills training in Pennsylvania is a priority for the Wolf Administration. Under Governor Wolf’s leadership, Pennsylvania has created several workforce development initiatives to meet local employer needs, including the Keystone Economic Development and Workforce Command Center, launched in 2019. This strategic public-private partnership helps to identify and address barriers to work, the skills gaps, and worker shortages in Pennsylvania – particularly in the healthcare industry, which has also benefitted from Industry Partnership grants.

Health Care Connect – a partnership administered by the Chester County Economic Development Council – received two \$250,000 PAsmart grants in recent years.

“Health Care Connect is very appreciative of PAsmart funding which has enabled the partnership to educate countless area health care workers on topics such as addiction and mental health challenges in the workplace, support training to elevate incumbent workers, create youth-centric pipelines, assemble action teams to focus on current challenges, create a website to educate and celebrate partners and establish legitimacy as a resource for the region’s health care industry,” said Mary Kay Owen, Health Care Connect project consultant for the Chester County Economic Development Council.

## **APPRENTICESHIPS UNDER THE WOLF ADMINISTRATION**

[Established in 2016, the Apprenticeship and Training Office \(ATO\) supports and expands registered pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs statewide.](#) The office provides outreach, education, and technical support to current and prospective program sponsors and apprentices. The ATO aims to expand the apprenticeship model to non-traditional occupations and ensure opportunities are available to under-represented and underserved communities across Pennsylvania. The ATO currently supports more than 17,000 active apprentices, nearly 5,000 new apprentices, and more than 1,580 active occupation-specific apprenticeship programs around the commonwealth.

Since 2016, apprenticeships have grown by 83 percent in the education sector; 71 percent in the healthcare sector and 64 percent in the technology sector. Pennsylvania continues to lead in the six-state region (PA, WV, VA, DE, MD, DC) in total number of programs, apprentices, and completions.

On average, apprentices earn a starting wage of \$70,000 per year after graduation and are on track to earn \$300,000 more over their careers compared to workers who don't graduate from an apprenticeship program. For every dollar spent on apprenticeships, employers get an average of \$1.47 back in increased productivity.

## **INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS UNDER THE WOLF ADMINISTRATION**

The Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board (PA WDB) is the governor's business-led, industry-driven policy advisor on workforce development that is aligned with the commonwealth's education and economic development goals. The PA WDB's mission is to ensure that Pennsylvania's entire workforce system, covering many agencies and programs, meets employers' needs for skilled workers and workers' needs for career and economic advancement.

The Workforce Development Board oversees Pennsylvania's Industry Partnership program. Industry partnerships coordinate and align workforce, education, economic development, and other public and community partners to support an industry sector. Led by regional businesses, these partnerships work to build stronger, more competitive industries through training, networking, recruitment, and collaboration to address business identified challenges.

Video and photo coverage from the event are available on [PACast.com](http://PACast.com).

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