

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

BY: EMILY SHIPLEY, V.P. OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS | ESHIPLEY@OKSTATECHAMBER.COM

AUGUST 2017

KEY FACTS

- One of the greatest factors in economic growth and stability is the availability of a workforce to accommodate business needs
- Although nearly two-thirds of Oklahoma jobs will require post-secondary education by the year 2020, only 37% of working adults are expected to have the necessary training
- While Oklahoma is ranked among the top 20 states on Chief Executive Magazine's 'Best States for Business' list, the state is still ranked 31st in the nation for labor supply (Forbes, 2016)

BACKGROUND

Workforce development refers to all facets of the education sector, including early childhood learning and development programs, elementary and secondary education, career technology education, higher education and continuing education. When addressing future business needs for growth and development, it is essential that education is taken into consideration alongside issues such as tax incentives and other productive methods of inspiring economic progress.

Oklahoma's economic vitality is dependent upon our system of education and our ability to address the state's workforce needs. Oklahoma's education system needs reform in order to meet future

workforce needs. Without the capacity to provide a workforce able to accommodate the needs of businesses both large and small, Oklahoma's economy cannot be enhanced or sustained.

STATE CHAMBER POSITION

The State Chamber of Oklahoma supports high standards and accountability in the education system. Additionally, the State Chamber supports school choice initiatives that focus on giving parents better options and providing schools more opportunities to spur innovation. Resulting reforms may include regulatory flexibility, charter and traditional school funding equality and educational savings accounts. Innovative pilot programs that seek to increase educational performance and narrow achievement gaps should be encouraged and funded.

The State Chamber also promotes programs and partnerships designed to educate students, parents and teachers about available and anticipated employment opportunities within our state. This will help ensure that students will be career or college ready when earning a high school diploma. Such efforts will encourage students to follow successful career pathways when pursuing diplomas, certifications or degrees in areas accommodating the state's workforce and economic needs.

Business involvement in education reform should also be encouraged. Businesses know best what skills and abilities will be required to sustain tomorrow's workforce, and their input should be taken into consideration when addressing our educational system.

From early childhood development programs to post-secondary and continuing life-long learning, all levels of education should be considered workforce development and in the best interest of Oklahoma's business community and our economy.