

Testimony for Field Hearing
Friday, October 24, 2014 – 10:00 AM
Hearing Room 1, North Office Building
401 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0211
Neil A. Ashbaugh – Training and Talent Development Specialist
Oberg Industries, Inc.

Good morning. Before I begin my comments, I'd like to thank the organization, Opportunity America, for working with the Leadership and members of the Career and Technical Education Caucus to hold this hearing on a topic that is a passion for me as a professional. My name is Neil Ashbaugh, and I am the Training and Talent Development Specialist for Oberg Industries. Since our founding in 1948 in Freeport, PA, approximately 35 miles north of Pittsburgh, Oberg has provided high value solutions to customers around the world concentrating on metal working and metal fabrication. We serve companies in the Aerospace, Energy, Medical, Metal Packaging, and Consumer/Industrial markets. We use the latest in precision manufacturing technologies throughout our more than 350,000 square/feet of manufacturing space. Our niche is high precision, tight tolerance work with typical working tolerances of +/- 20 millionths of an inch. To put that into perspective, that means taking a single hair from your head and splitting it 150 times. While the variety of customers we serve, and the amount of technology we have is quite impressive, the competitive advantage we rely on; our unique solution in this business equation, are our people.

Our employees are highly trained, each with skills and abilities that have been learned over years through on the job training and blended learning. Many of our employees, including myself, have participated in our Registered Apprenticeship Program.

While the people we employ come to us in a variety of ways, one main focus of our success has been through the established relationships with educational institutions who help students complete their education with an emphasis on Career and Technical skills

development. Oberg has long worked with students from the Butler County Area and Lenape Vo-Tech Schools. These students typically are more advanced in the skills we need such as, Trigonometry and Applied Mathematics, Blue Print reading, basic Metrology, and Safety practices.

Oberg also works with Community Colleges and Career and Technical Education Centers throughout Western PA on a variety of STEM programs that include BotsIQ, SkillsUSA, and the Technology Merit Badge Academy, which is a collaboration with the Moraine Trails Council, Boy Scouts of America. The purpose of all of these events is to bring together the best youth to learn and identify future career opportunities from those of us in business and industry who need them in our workforce.

Building upon these successes in working with these career and technical education schools, we partnered with a public education school, Highlands Area School District, and began a pilot program we call the Junior Apprenticeship Advantage, or "JAA". This new program is a collaborative program between Oberg Industries and the Highlands High School. Its purpose is to teach basic Manufacturing Skills within the curriculum of a student's senior year by the staff of Highlands to meet the standards as needed by our company. In return, the students will then travel to Oberg Industries for one day, lesson specific, learning enrichment opportunities during the school year. Our ultimate goal is to then offer to those top ranked students who successfully complete JAA in good academic standing preferred placement entrance into our Apprenticeship and full-time employment upon graduation from high school.

While I have shared many efforts to create the future workforce pipeline and Oberg's intricate relationship with Career and Technical Education providers in our region, more needs to be done. We need to work together to build more awareness with our students, parents, educators, and business and civic leaders to show them the benefits of skills training and education. Family sustaining jobs are not a fantasy, but rather a reality when coupled with the right training and a passion for life-long learning. I, along with the 800

plus employees of Oberg Industries, along with the employees of the over 300 Manufacturing companies in Butler County, all understand this one thought.

“If you work with your hands, and only your hands, you are a laborer...

If you work with your hands and your mind, then you are a craftsperson...

But if you work with your hands, your mind, and with your heart...then you are a professional.”

Please support my effort to continue to work with newer and newer professionals. Please continue to support Career and Technical Education for all who desire it.

Thank you