

**Prepared Testimony of Laura Shubilla  
President of the Philadelphia Youth Network  
to Philadelphia City Council's Committee on Labor and Civil Service  
March 15, 2004, 10 am**

Mr. Chairman, Members of City Council, my name is Laura Shubilla. I am the President of the Philadelphia Youth Network. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss some of the ways in which Philadelphia youth are being prepared to become active and productive members of the future workforce.

**Background.** The Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) is a not-for-profit city-wide workforce intermediary organization developed to promote academic achievement and career success for 14 to 21 year-olds in Philadelphia. We staff the City's Youth Council, which is a statutorily mandated subgroup of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board (WIB), and we also administer federal funds made available to the Philadelphia WIB. In addition, we work to improve the quality of programs and services available to Philadelphia youth by building the capacity of local youth service organizations, promoting the adoption of research-based effective practices and leveraging new funds for local youth workforce development efforts.

In short, the core mission of the Philadelphia Youth Network is to prepare City youth for productive employment and active citizenship by providing organized and comprehensible pathways into the mainstream economy that result in positive education and employment outcomes.

Over the last five years, the Philadelphia Youth Network has promoted the creation of a comprehensive and comprehensible system that provides clear access points for both employers and young people, and that aligns resources available to the City with a set of shared goals and outcomes. In order for this system to be effective, quality preparation for youth must be combined with opportunities provided by willing employers. These opportunities differ based on the age and readiness of young people, ranging from exposure to different career areas, especially high growth sectors in our region, to internships, summer jobs and long term employment. Key features include:

- *Connections to schools.* All experiences provide connections to school. Summer internships, for example, are project- based and aligned with school district standards. Approximately 70% of summer interns receive academic credit for their projects.
- *Work readiness training.* Last summer over 3,000 youth attended work readiness summits on two Saturdays in June where they were trained by

180 private sector and community volunteers on the skills needed to successfully retain their jobs.

- *Connections to year-round programming.* Increasingly, all summer experiences are components of year-round programs. For example, each summer approximately 315 youth with disabilities, for whom employment is a goal on their Individual Education Plans, are employed through the summer program. In addition to jobs, several hundred youth also participate in residential experiences on college campuses and are involved year round with that college or university.

In these ways, and in many others, the Philadelphia Youth Network seeks to improve the workforce prospects of the City's young people.

**WorkReady Philadelphia: Building a Citywide System.** Mr. Chairman, with regard to youth employment programming in the City of Philadelphia and elsewhere, there is bad news, and there is good news.

The bad news is that, according to the researchers at Northeastern University, the summer of 2003 was the worst for teenage employment prospects in the last half-century. In Philadelphia, we regularly turn away from 3,000 – 5,000 young people who seek Youth Council-supported opportunities, but for whom there are no slots available. To compound this problem, for program year 2003-04, federal Workforce Investment Act youth funds available to the City were slashed by an astonishing 23%, or \$1.8 million. This cut resulted in the loss of almost **1,000** slots available for young people to participate in youth workforce development programming.

But there is also good news. With the leadership of Pamela Crawley, Vice President and Director of Public Affairs for Citizens Bank and Chair of the Philadelphia Youth Council; and George Davis, Senior Vice President of Lincoln Financial Group and Chair of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, major efforts are now underway to build new "home-grown" workforce development opportunities for Philadelphia youth.

The leadership of the WIB and its Youth Council have resulted in the creation "WorkReady Philadelphia," a citywide system for youth workforce preparation that is designed to coordinate existing programs and services, and, importantly, to expand the number of opportunities available to young people, including unsubsidized private sector internships. WorkReady is co-chaired by Mayor Street; Jon Boscia, Chair and CEO of Lincoln Financial Group, and School District CEO Paul Vallas, all of whom continue to provide extraordinary leadership for the campaign.

As I stated, WorkReady Philadelphia is designed both to coordinate existing efforts, and to build new opportunities. Let me briefly describe four of WorkReady's key components.

1. Philadelphia YouthWorks is the term given to summer- and year-round youth workforce programming that is supported predominately by federal funds, that in 2003-04 includes about \$6 million from the Workforce Investment Act, and slightly more than \$3 million from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families allocated to the WIB by the PA Department of Public Welfare. Together, these funding streams support summer and year-round youth workforce opportunities for about 5,000 youth.
2. The Summer Career Exploration Program (SCEP) is supported by the William Penn Foundation, with additional funding from more than a dozen other local philanthropies. SCEP has provided enhanced summer jobs for more than 20 years. In the 2003 summer, approximately 1,300 youth were placed in subsidized employment in predominately private sector workplaces. Importantly, for the first time last summer SCEP and YouthWorks were brought together into a single coordinated administrative structure, resulting in increased efficiencies and programmatic alignment.
3. In the summer of 2003, the School District of Philadelphia initiated its Summer Development Institute, designed to help credit-deficient rising ninth and tenth graders to complete required coursework and be promoted. As an incentive for students to participate, the School District pledged funding for as many as 1,000 young people to participate in afternoon jobs and service opportunities. Working with Mr. Vallas and Dr. Creg Williams, Vice-Chair of the Youth Council, we hope to refine and expand this model for next summer and beyond.
4. An essential goal of the WorkReady Philadelphia campaign is to create new, unsubsidized summer internships for young people. Last year, we were successful in generating almost 200 internships. One hundred percent of employers responding to our follow-up survey indicated that they would hire WorkReady interns again. While that was a good beginning, we know we can do much better this coming summer. So we are reaching out to employers across the City for their support in hiring young interns this summer, to donate funding that can support a young person at another worksite, or to contribute to the work of the campaign in other ways. Costs to support a summer intern are as low as \$1,000. We would greatly value Council's help in getting the word out concerning WorkReady, and in supporting internships in any way that you can.

I have attached to my testimony information on the WorkReady Philadelphia campaign, and would be pleased to provide the Council with any additional information.

In closing, let me highlight two other powerful youth workforce partnerships involving City agencies.

- Working with Philadelphia Family Court and the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation, we have developed a system for young offenders who are referred or under court order to attend educational programming, ensuring that they have access to high-quality academic instruction and employment opportunities. Judge Field, who is also a Youth Council member, has provided extraordinary leadership to this effort.
- In collaboration with the Department of Human Services and PWDC the Achieving Independence Center provides opportunities for youth aging out of the foster care system to learn a wide variety of work readiness and occupational skills by working in a functioning café and participating professional training programs.

These are only two of a significant number of new partnerships that are forming throughout the City in support of our young people.

In summary, I believe, despite the major challenges associated with current economic conditions and the decreasing federal support for youth workforce programming, that Philadelphia is on the verge of creating a system for youth workforce development that is unrivaled anywhere in this nation.

- We have leadership and support from the City, the School District, the foundation community and private employers across Philadelphia.
- We are blessed with high-quality youth service organizations that deliver research-based effective practices.
- And we have talented young people who are eager to take advantage of the powerful positive experiences that come from working and serving in their community.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Council Members, for your interest and leadership in this area. I look forward to working with the Council to ensure that all of our young people have access to the enriching workforce development opportunities that they need, and that they deserve.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.