



Mike DeWine, Governor  
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Common Sense  
Initiative

Carrie Kuruc, Director

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**Small Business Advisory Council Meeting – Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 24, 2019, 10:00 a.m.**

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Emily Groseclose, Common Sense Initiative (CSI) Senior Policy and Business Advocate.

Members present:

- Thomas Demaline
- Doug Barry
- Carvel Simmons
- William Bishop
- Mike Kahoe
- Representative George Lang

Mrs. Groseclose reviewed the meeting agenda and asked for approval of the minutes from the August 22, 2019 meeting. Mrs. Groseclose then introduced Barbara Benton, Vice President of Government Relations for the Ohio Society of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs).

Ms. Benton addressed the Council regarding the licensing process for CPAs in Ohio, and her organization's efforts to increase the number of CPAs by allowing students to take the exam earlier than what is currently allowed by Ohio law. Every state requires an individual to successfully complete 150 hours of education to be eligible to be a CPA; however, some states allow CPA candidates to sit for the exam once they complete 120 hours. The Ohio Society of CPAs is advocating that Ohio take the same approach to testing. Ms. Benton stated that many other states already allow CPA candidates to take the exam earlier and that allowing them to sit for the exam after completing 120 hours of education (generally the amount of hours needed to obtain a bachelor's degree) would incentivize candidates to become licensed and work in Ohio. Ms. Benton noted that there is a workforce shortage of accountants in Ohio, and the Ohio Society of CPAs sees the adoption of this policy as an obvious step in the right direction for the state.

Mrs. Groseclose thanked Ms. Benton for addressing the Council, and introduced the next speaker, John Sherwood, Workforce Project Manager for the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation (OWT).

Mr. Sherwood introduced the TechCred program, an OWT initiative to help Ohioans learn new skills needed in a technology-infused economy and help employers build a stronger workforce. TechCred is an employer-based program that can reimburse employers for up to \$2,000 for one training credential per

employee during each funding round. Each employer is eligible to receive up to \$30,000 per award period. Applications consider criteria such as employer contribution, benefits to the employee, and economic distress in the geographic area in which the applicant runs its business. The program also evaluates applicants on how the training may contribute to an employee's marketability and how the technology-related education helps prepare Ohio's workforce for the future. Employers are responsible for deciding which provider is most appropriate for providing the applicable training to employees.

Mrs. Groseclose thanked Mr. Sherwood for taking the time to speak to the Council and introduced a panel from the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC), which included Kevin Abrams, Chief Operating Officer, Winnie Warren, Interim Chief of Employer Services, and Andrew Conners, Legislative Liaison.

Mr. Abrams discussed BWC's efforts to be more customer-service centric with the health of the state at the forefront of their focus. He stated that BWC is working to build upon successes of the last few years. One of those accomplishments includes a \$1.5 billion employer dividend, the fifth of such rebates since 2013. Mr. Abrams also noted that BWC has cut rates 10 times since 2008 with no rate increases during that time, which he stated accounts for over \$10 billion in savings for Ohio employers. Rates in Ohio are currently the 16<sup>th</sup> lowest in the country. Additionally, claims in recent decades have drastically dropped, following a national trend. Mr. Abrams addressed the various programs available to employers and explained the benefits of each. Currently, BWC is coordinating with local Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health boards to encourage employers to hire individuals that are in addiction or mental health treatment recovery programs. The panel highlighted two programs that BWC has available specifically for small businesses: Better You Better Ohio, a free wellness program available to employees, and the Policy Activity Rebate program, a pilot program for employers that do not qualify for group rating to get back 50% of their premiums, up to \$2,000. Mr. Abrahams encouraged the Council to give feedback to BWC on how they can better interact with small businesses.

CSI staff and the Council discussed future meeting dates, and scheduled 2020 meetings for February 6, May 7, August 6, and November 5.

Mrs. Groseclose introduced Mike Duffey, Deputy Director of InnovateOhio. Mr. Duffey shared with the Council the mission of InnovateOhio and how the work of that office can help Ohio's small businesses. He discussed the confusion that a large bureaucracy can create for individuals and businesses, and InnovateOhio's efforts to streamline government services. Mr. Duffey then addressed specific focuses of the office, which currently include the use of blockchain technology to improve government functions and customer experience, and efforts to create a uniform intellectual property policy across Ohio's institutions of higher education. InnovateOhio is also exploring ways that Ohio can use data to improve services, specifically with regards to the warrant systems between local law enforcement offices in Ohio.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.