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**FINAL REPORT OF THE SENATE STUDY COMMITTEE ON EXPANDING
GEORGIA'S WORKFORCE (SR 275)**

Committee Members

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District 56

Senator Brandon Beach
District 21

Ryan Pernice
CEO, RO Hospitality

Senator Jason Esteves
District 6

Joseph McDermott
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Senator Billy Hickman
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*Vice President, Georgia Chamber of
Commerce Foundation*

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*Commissioner, Technical College
System of Georgia*

Prepared by the Senate Office of Policy & Legislative Analysis, 2023

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STUDY COMMITTEE CREATION, FOCUS, AND DUTIES

The Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia’s Workforce was created by Senate Resolution 275 during the 2023 Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly.¹ The Study Committee was tasked with examining Georgia’s current practices, pilot programs, and public-private partnerships and initiatives regarding workforce development across the state to identify opportunities to strengthen and sustain Georgia’s workforce.

Senator John Albers served as Chair of the Study Committee. The other Senate members were Senators Brandon Beach, Jason Esteves, Sonya Halpern, and Billy Hickman. Additional members appointed to the Study Committee included Champ Bailey, small business owner; Ryan Pernice, midsized business representative; Joseph McDermott, large business representative; Commissioner Greg Dozier, Technical College System of Georgia; Dave Williams, Senior Vice President of Public Policy & Talent, Metro Atlanta Chamber; and Daniela Perry, Vice President, Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

The following legislative staff members were assigned to the Study Committee: Lexi Washney, Senate Press Office; Hayley Williams, Senate Office of Policy & Legislative Analysis; Allison Bailey, Office of Senator John Albers; and Shawn Marie Story, Office of Legislative Counsel.

¹ <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/65174>

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY AND DISCUSSION

Over the course of five meetings, the Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia's Workforce heard extensive testimony from representatives of various regions and industries across the state.

Testimony was provided by the following:

- Jamal Jessie, Georgia Power
- Sharon Mason, Cobb Chamber
- Stephen Jones, UPS
- Marc Friday and Ramon Reyes, Georgia Hotel and Lodging Association
- Jasmine Campbell and Brett Lacy, Select Fulton
- Trip Tollison, Savannah Economic Development Authority
- Maria Whitfield, Savannah Joint Development Authority
- Jay Neely, Gulfstream
- Stacey Watson, Georgia Ports Authority
- Scott Bierman and Jamie Durrence, Georgia Restaurant Association
- Bart Freeman, Daniel Defense
- Patrick Bean and Emeline Hastings, Military Council
- Meredith Champagne and Bill Kelso, Goodwill
- Stuart Countess, KIA
- D'Arcy Robb, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Zack Fields, Construction Ready
- Shane McClellan, Carroll Daniel Construction
- Tim Cairl, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
- Deputy Commissioner Al Howell, Georgia Department of Administrative Services
- Noah Reonitz, Georgia Municipal Association
- Clint Mueller, ACCG
- Shane Jackson, Jackson Healthcare
- Commissioner Tyler Harper, Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Shawn Little and Gale Macke, Georgia Nursing Leadership Council
- Phil Sutton, Kubota
- Stephanie Scarce, Georgia Manufacturing Association
- Steven Jahng, SK Battery
- Mallory Safley and Stephanie Womack, Georgia Association of Colleges and Employers
- Hunter Loggins, National Federation of Independent Business
- Hillary Thrower, The Home Depot
- Ben Jordan and Jason Denson, Georgia Automobile Dealers Association
- Lisa Nash, QCells
- Fred McConnell, ACT Work Ready Communities
- Brian Cooksey, Shaw Industries
- Mark Williams and Bob Pratt, Georgia Alliance for Career Education

A few major themes emerged from that testimony. First, employers – both public and private – are facing unprecedented challenges in recruitment and retention. Most agree that marketing, or lack thereof, poses the most significant challenge to successful recruitment. This is particularly true among professions requiring technical or experiential training (i.e., skilled trades). Second, most employers agree that there are many opportunities to expand Georgia's workforce by advertising and enhancing existing programs and partnerships. For example, there are existing apprenticeship programs throughout the state that are woefully underutilized due to lack of adequate messaging among target audiences – students, their families, and their schools. Third, most employers agree that career exposure must begin by the time students reach middle school, and career development must be strengthened for students in high school. Dozens of employers shared with the Committee that a number of their employees require extensive soft skills development after hiring them, as an

increasing number of young adults complete their formal education without gaining any “real world” work experience prior to entering the workforce full-time.

The Committee heard valuable testimony from leaders and businesses across multiple industries and sectors, much of which was highly specific to their respective organizations. Much of that testimony was based on internal surveys that cannot be independently verified for purposes of this report, but presentations and outlines of testimony are attached in full in the Appendix to this report.

Meeting 1 – June 20, 2023 (Atlanta, GA)

The Study Committee held its first meeting on June 20, 2023, at the Georgia Power Experience Center in Atlanta, Georgia. The committee heard testimony from the following:

- Hayley Williams, Senate Office of Policy & Legislative Analysis
- Jamal Jessie, Georgia Power
- Sharon Mason, Cobb Chamber
- Stephen Jones, UPS
- Marc Friday and Ramon Reyes, Georgia Hotel and Lodging Association
- Jasmine Campbell and Brett Lacy, Select Fulton

Meeting 2 – July 25, 2023 (Savannah, GA)

The Study Committee held its second meeting on July 25, 2023, at Savannah Economic Development Authority in Savannah, Georgia. The committee heard testimony from the following:

- Trip Tollison, Savannah Economic Development Authority
- Maria Whitfield, Savannah Joint Development Authority
- Jay Neely, Gulfstream
- Stacey Watson, Georgia Ports Authority
- Scott Bierman and Jamie Durrence, Georgia Restaurant Association
- Bart Freeman, Daniel Defense
- Patrick Bean and Emeline Hastings, Military Council
- Meredith Champagne and Bill Kelso, Goodwill

Meeting 3 – August 22, 2023 (West Point, GA)

The Study Committee held its third meeting on August 22, 2023, at the KIA Georgia Training Center in West Point, Georgia. The committee heard testimony from the following:

- Stuart Countess, KIA
- D’Arcy Robb, Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Zack Fields, Construction Ready
- Shane McClellan, Carroll Daniel Construction
- Tim Cairl, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
- Deputy Commissioner Al Howell, Georgia Department of Administrative Services
- Noah Reonitz, Georgia Municipal Association
- Clint Mueller, ACCG

Meeting 4 – September 19, 2023 (Commerce, GA)

The Study Committee held its fourth meeting on September 19, 2023, at the Commerce Cultural Arts Center in Commerce, Georgia. The committee heard testimony from the following:

- Shane Jackson, Jackson Healthcare
- Commissioner Tyler Harper, Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Shawn Little and Gale Macke, Georgia Nursing Leadership Council
- Phil Sutton, Kubota
- Stephanie Scearce, Georgia Manufacturing Association
- Steven Jahng, SK Battery

Meeting 5 – October 26, 2023 (Dalton, GA)

The Study Committee held its fifth meeting on October 26, 2023, at Dalton State University in Dalton, Georgia. The committee heard testimony from the following:

- Mallory Safley and Stephanie Womack, Georgia Association of Colleges and Employers
- Hunter Loggins, National Federation of Independent Business
- Hillary Thrower, The Home Depot
- Ben Jordan and Jason Denson, Georgia Automobile Dealers Association
- Lisa Nash, QCells
- Fred McConnell, ACT Work Ready Communities
- Brian Cooksey, Shaw Industries
- Mark Williams and Bob Pratt, Georgia Alliance for Career Education

Meeting 6 – November 14, 2023 (Atlanta, GA)

The sixth and final meeting of the Study Committee was held at the State Capitol on November 14, 2023. Lt. Governor Burt Jones offered his thanks to the study committee members for their work during the interim period, noting that improving workforce opportunities for Georgians of all skill levels is among his highest priorities. Lt. Gov. Jones told the Committee that, in discussions with leaders of businesses large and small during his first 10 months in office, the need to attract and retain skilled workers was the policy and economic issue that united them. He expressed his hope that the work of the Committee would lead to legislation in 2024 that will make it easier and faster for students to complete their training, obtain licenses or other credentials, and better match their skills to available jobs. The committee then discussed and adopted this report and its recommendations.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the testimony and research presented, the Senate Study Committee on Expanding Georgia's Workforce offers the following recommendations.

A. Policy Recommendations

1. Workforce Marketing

- i. Strengthen marketing of non-traditional education and jobs, especially through early career exposure and focus on long-term career advancement opportunities to middle and high school students.
- ii. Provide additional resources to help schools educate parents on career pathways so parents are able to educate their children on the same.
 - Explore opportunities to distribute resources to parents directly to minimize the administrative burden for schools and districts. Consider designated parental liaisons within GaDOE.
- iii. Create a state-facilitated, free platform like Indeed for all Georgia employers and prospective employers. Similar regional platforms that were launched in Macon and Augusta could provide a template.

2. K-12 Education

- i. Reinstate courses from years past that offer development of technical skills and skilled trades such as shop, mechanics, etc., rather than solely focusing on college readiness.
- ii. Expand the College and Career Academy system.
- iii. Ensure CTAE programs offered in high schools are aligned with local industries to develop strong workforce pipelines.
- iv. Reduce the number of career pathways within each cluster to lessen duplicity and increase clarity for students and businesses about what each pathway entails.
- v. Align all CTAE pathways with TCSG and USG programs. A completely aligned talent pipeline is critical for long-term workforce success.
- vi. Require work study and/or professionalism coursework as a condition of graduation from high school.
- vii. Support Governor Kemp's investment in additional high school counselors to provide more resources and guidance to students on college and career opportunities.
- viii. Enhance existing apprenticeship programs and consider an expansion or overhaul using South Carolina's program as a model.

3. Higher Education

- i. Encourage TCSG to offer programs with the intention of serving the specific industry needs of corresponding communities and regions.
- ii. Encourage TCSG to provide more micro credentials to meet evolving needs to have more short term training offerings.
- iii. Encourage implementation of additional digital student supports using AI to provide new opportunities to engage with students through technology in a more efficient manner to increase degree persistence and completion.
- iv. Find ways to "celebrate" acceptance to TCSG institutions. Examples could include acceptance packages, mixers for incoming students, etc.

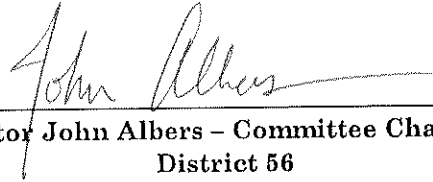
4. Inclusivity
 - i. Promote “GAME” – Georgia as Model Employer – to encourage accommodations and employment of individuals with developmental disabilities in state government.
 - ii. Enhance accessibility of English language programs and develop advanced/vocation-specific English language programs.
 - iii. Remove barriers to admission at Georgia’s public colleges and universities by recognizing credentials earned abroad and adopting more flexible requirements.
 - iv. Create a web based platform to support small businesses and incentivize entrepreneurship programs to support business start-ups in different languages or with interpretation.

B. Legislative Recommendations

1. Articulation Agreements
 - i. Enact legislation calling on the USG Chancellor and TCSG Commissioner to develop and coordinate a program for transfer of credits in high-demand careers such as construction management between TCSG and USG.
2. Licensing
 - i. Enhance and expand reciprocity agreements in high-demand fields.
 - ii. Promote flexibility in occupational licensing requirements (educational and experiential) to maintain and expand talent pipelines for essential workers.
 - iii. Allow counties to train CDL drivers instead of requiring an 8-week course through a technical school.
 - iv. Explore options for cutting down on prerequisites established by licensing boards. For example, some boards require a 4 year degree to be eligible for licensure in fields that are highly technical, thereby forcing individuals to complete unrelated general coursework and further delay their entry or return to the workforce.
3. Program Funding
 - i. Consider increased funding for tuition reimbursement program in high demand fields.
 - ii. Consider a grant program for high school graduates to incentivize gap year employment with a local government entity before enrolling in college.
 - iii. Consider funding the statewide employment portal referenced above.
4. Other
 - i. Urge further study of the negative impacts of benefit cliffs and ways to mitigate them in specific communities.
 - ii. Revisit incentives for retirees to return to the workforce, especially in high demand professions such as nursing and teaching.
 - iii. Consider programs to encourage local school systems to build childcare centers for the children of teachers and staff, such as those currently operating in Effingham and Bryan Counties.
 - iv. Pass SB 112, establishing the Excel Center pilot program for awarding high school diplomas to adults over the age of 21.

Respectfully Submitted,

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GEORGIA'S WORKFORCE (SR 275)**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Albers". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Senator John Albers – Committee Chairman
District 56**