

**Testimony of Pamela Crawley**  
**Philadelphia City Council**  
**February 6, 2007**

Good morning, Madame Chair and members of City Council. My name is Pamela Crawley. I am Senior Vice President and Director of Public Affairs at Citizens Bank. I am also the outgoing Chair of the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, a business-oriented committee appointed by the Mayor to oversee workforce policy and to approve federal workforce funding for the City of Philadelphia. And from 2002-2005, I served as Chair of the Philadelphia Youth Council, a committee of the Workforce Board, that develops youth policy and recommends funding for youth employment programs in the City.

I have several points I want to make this morning, but my take-away message to you is straightforward: the young people of this City are its greatest assets, and we must do everything we can to ensure that we nurture and grow those assets for the future. This fact is indisputable, and must be considered beyond politics and trends of the moment. For Philadelphia employers, this is a matter of economic stability and long-term growth and productivity. For the citizens of this City, it is an issue that will affect their quality of life, their safety and security and the well-being of their communities. And for many of our young people, it is, quite literally, a matter of life and death.

The Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board and its Youth Council have worked hard over the last six years to build a system of youth workforce preparation in this City that features academically enriched workplace

experiences and career exploration activities for youth and young adults who are in school, as well as those who have left high school without a diploma. We took this broad-based approach to workforce preparation for several reasons:

- First, there is no question that our economy and the businesses that fuel it need a continuing flow of highly-skilled, well-educated employees.
- Second, while we must continue our efforts to attract the best and brightest young professionals to relocate to Philadelphia, we must also focus on building and nurturing our own home-grown high-skilled 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.
- Next, we believe that providing our young people with high-quality workplace experiences is an extremely effective way to help them understand the value of academic preparation and skills development, which in turn will help them to stay in school, graduate and go on to be successful in college and careers; and
- Finally, we must provide opportunities for young people who have dropped out of school to re-connect to educational programming where they can prepare themselves to become active and productive citizens.

When the Mayor appointed me to chair of the Youth Council in 2002, my first priority was to create a citywide system of youth workforce preparation that would not only coordinate and strengthen existing youth employment programs, but also encourage businesses to develop employer-supported student internships. This effort culminated in the creation of WorkReady Philadelphia, which now provides workplace-related programs and

opportunities for almost 10,000 young people each year. Importantly, young WorkReady participants not only earn money and gain valuable work experience, almost three-quarters of them also earn academic credit for projects and related work they perform while in WorkReady programming.

I am proud that Citizens Bank has hired dozens of young WorkReady interns. And I'm particularly pleased that Joe Frick, President and CEO of Independence Blue Cross and Chair of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, has made employer support for internships one of his top priorities for his tenure as Chamber Chair.

I am also proud of the Youth Council's role in establishing the Youth Transitions Collaborative and Project U-Turn. These efforts emerged from the Council's increased attention to and support for out-of-school and other disconnected youth. It is heartening to witness how these efforts are now gaining traction throughout the City, and helping to inform the thoughtful strategies and recommendations to resolve the City's dropout crisis that you are hearing about today.

With all of this in mind, and based on my experiences as a private employer and chair of public workforce bodies, let me offer several recommendations on these issues:

1. As you consider how to balance the needs of young people and the fiscal realities that confront us, please keep in mind the importance of providing high-quality workplace exposure and career preparation, as strategies that both promote graduation and prevent dropouts by helping students understand the relevance of their academic studies.

2. Please appreciate that many youth who have dropped out of school now understand their mistakes, and desperately want to return to get the education and skills they need for career success. Our support for their efforts will benefit not only those young people, but the City as a whole.
3. Understand that the problems of struggling students and out-of-school youth are often too big for any single institution, even the School District, to tackle alone. Therefore, your support for cross-system approaches that bring together the resources and strengths of public care systems can be a key to success for these young people.
4. Finally, realize that you are not alone in addressing these challenges. My experiences as Chair of the Youth Council and Workforce Board convince me that the business community, foundations, community organizations and citizens care deeply about the well-being of our young people, and that they are willing to redouble their efforts, in collaboration with the City and School District, to find solutions that work for our young people and for all of us.

Thank you, Madame Chairman, for the opportunity to address these important issues before you today. I applaud your leadership and commitment, and look forward to working with you in the future on behalf of our young people.