

**Testimony Regarding HB 2196, The Youth Employment Incentive Tax Credit**

**Submitted by:**

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Dear Chair and Members of the House Finance Committee:

I am glad to offer my support for almost anything that will increase the opportunity for young people to have real-world career training through internships. And I'm glad to see that HB 2196 allows a wide age range and reasonable income guidelines for qualifying interns.

The Coro Center for Civic Leadership is Pittsburgh's primary organization for training tomorrow's leaders. We offer committed leadership development through the Coro Fellows in Public Affairs, the Pittsburgh home of the Public Allies program, and other leadership programs for specific groups, such as Women in Leadership and Community Problem Solvers.

But I want to talk today about another aspect of Coro's work that fits well with the intent of the Youth Employment Incentive Tax Credit. I want to talk about the Regional Internship Center of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Regional Internship Center, generally known as the RIC, was implemented about three years ago to allow college students and employers to find each other so that the students can get internship experience in areas where they are considering careers and employers can meet potential employees and bring them into their company culture for the future. The RIC operates through modern technology and minimizes staff and overhead expense by allowing employers to post their opportunities and students to post resumes. RIC staff helps make the matches, assist employers with designing the internship project, and help employers with the HR aspects of having interns. They also help students to design appropriate resumes to market themselves to companies. About 1500 interns have been employed through this system, some in multiple internships. RIC staff also manages the region-wide Summer Internship Program. This is an opportunity for about 2500 college students doing summer internships to experience a wide array of social and entertainment offerings in the Pittsburgh area over the course of the summer so that they get a picture of what it is like to work and live here. A number of the summer interns come to Pittsburgh companies from outside the region to get specific internship experiences. Many of them do not think of coming back to work when they arrive. But the summer internship experience shows

them what Pittsburgh has to offer and can change their thinking about locating here after graduation.

When the RIC was being planned, the Coro Center surveyed local employers and found that 40% of the students who interned were eventually offered jobs with the organizations where they interned. Half of those who were offered jobs accepted them. Many of those who did not accept were offered multiple jobs with other employers, often based on the experience that they got from internships while in school. Educators are only beginning to fully understand what college students have known for years – an internship during college makes you more employable after college.

HB 2196 has the potential to expand the number of internships available to students by making the internship almost expense-free to the employer. While there are age and income guidelines for interns, there are many college students who fall within those guidelines. College is no longer the province of only the wealthy. And the age limit through 21 years old will cover most college students. While internships are a great education experience, they are also opportunities for financial support for students if they are paid internships. Students often will take unpaid internships to get the job experience, but a paid internship offers double rewards – both educational and financial. HB 2196 will make it possible for more employers to offer pay to interns for their services.

Finally, I'd like to say that we hope to be able to expand the services offered by the Regional Internship Center in the future. We now limit the service to college students, primarily because there were not enough high school internships available. But if HB 2196 and other state efforts to support internships in high school are successful, the RIC is a logical and effective way to make connections for the expanded number of high school internships that will result. The process for placing high school interns will be much the same as it is for college students and high school students will get an early start on job experience and career selection.

Thank you, committee members for adding an effective tool to the career preparation tool kit. My experience has been that employers want to have interns – both as enhancements to their organization and as a commitment to the community. But tight budgets and fears a soft economy may make it difficult for employers to include internships in their operating expenses. A targeted tax credit will allow both the employer and student to experience the benefits of internships. I fully support the bill and I hope it has speedy passage.