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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PA House Commerce Committee Chair Calls for Investment in Small Business Development Centers to Counteract Recession

SBDC Locations

Bucknell University
Clarion University
Duquesne University
Gannon University
Indiana University
of Pennsylvania
Kutztown University
of Pennsylvania
Lehigh University
Lock Haven University
Penn State University
Saint Francis University
Saint Vincent College
Shippensburg University
Temple University
University of Pittsburgh
University of Scranton
The Wharton School,
University of Pennsylvania
Widener University
Wilkes University

PHILADELPHIA—How do you stimulate economic development in a recession? **State Representative Peter J. Daley** (D-Washington/Fayette) convened the [Pennsylvania House of Representatives Commerce Committee](#) in Harrisburg, Pa. yesterday to examine possible solutions.

Daley, who chairs the committee, soberly noted that proposed cuts in [Senate Bill 850](#) would largely hinder the efforts of several state-funded economic development organizations.

“Pennsylvania has led the nation in its innovative economic development tools. I am extremely frustrated that after 27 years of efforts to create and sustain business growth, we would cut programs that clearly help grow the economy,” he said.

The [Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) joined the Local Development Districts and the Industrial Research Centers in offering testimony as to how its services are helping small businesses keep their doors open and contribute to the state’s tax base. As the largest provider of business assistance services, the SBDC serves 30,000 Pennsylvanians annually—leveraging state funding support to provide these services at no fee.

“If a business isn’t profitable, it will not be able to continue, and business failure is costly in many ways,” Christian Conroy, State Director of the Pennsylvania SBDC, testified. “Lost are jobs, wealth, tax base and community services.” He pointed out that the SBDC program is in a unique position to address the commonwealth’s economic activities through helping businesses in any county, any industry or any stage of business.

“We’re locally focused, we have very strong relationships with other local business organizations, and we’re able to leverage resources within our host universities to give small business owners a very powerful set of tools,” Conroy said.

Elaine Tweedy, director of the University of Scranton SBDC, noted that a particular strength of the program is its focus on the long-term. “We help businesses think strategically so that they are prepared to address issues that arise, which positions them for growth down the line,” she said.

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Nancy Sarno, part-owner of [Sarno & Son Tuxedo Rentals](#) concurs. “Because we are a small, independent, family-run business, we relied heavily on the expertise of the SBDC over the years,” Sarno confirmed. “Where else can a small business find quick and efficient answers to issues that arise in business? I don’t know what we would have done with out their services.”

When Sarno’s company began working with the center in 1991, the Dunmore-based business had approximately 50 employees across four states. In leveraging the SBDC’s strategic planning and range of business services, including regulatory and energy efficiency assistance, Sarno eventually relocated to a 46,000 square foot facility in Scranton and ramped up to 125 employees, expanding into nine states.

Ed Huttenhower of the Saint Francis University SBDC noted that helping small firms identify new markets, such as those abroad, is another way the SBDCs are keeping small businesses competitive. Bill Riggs of [J&J Truck Bodies](#), which has manufactured truck bodies and trailers in Somerset, Pa. for more than 50 years, said the center played a significant role in helping his company generate sales in South Africa, Vietnam, Russia, Chile and Saudi Arabia.

Representatives of the University of Pittsburgh and Temple University SBDCs also recognized the program’s efforts to support recently dislocated workers, agribusinesses and minority entrepreneurs. Presenting organizations noted they are seeing increased demand since the recession.

“We have long recognized that all businesses, including small ones, are players in the global economy,” Daley said. “The state’s budget needs to reflect that. You don’t cut the things that help grow revenue or you’re going to find the same problem seven years down the road. It’s counterproductive.”

About the Pennsylvania SBDC

Since its inception in 1980, the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) has evolved into a network of 18 university-based centers and more than 100 outreach locations, operating under the guidance of the State Director located at the University of Pennsylvania. Funding support from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the U.S. Small Business Administration and the SBDC host institutions enables consulting services to be provided at no charge to the client. For more information on the Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers’ services and impact, visit www.pasbdc.org.

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