Testimony of Dr. Paul Carlsen, President
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Good afternoon Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, Representative Grothman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am the president of Lakeshore Technical College (LTC) located in Wisconsin. One of sixteen technical colleges in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), our main campus is centrally-located in rural farmland near the shores of Lake Michigan where we serve the people of Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Calumet, and Ozaukee counties. LTC serves approximately 11,000 students each year and exists as an open-access institution to train the skilled workforce of today and tomorrow.

Manufacturing is the top industry in Wisconsin[1] and the industry employs 36,000 workers in LTC's region[2]. In 2014, LTC opened the KOHLER Center for Manufacturing Excellence with nearly $3 million in private funding to expand training opportunities for regional employers. Manufacturing continues to advance and innovate at a feverish rate, and the skills required to work in this industry have rapidly evolved since 2014. Today, area employers are expanding the use of automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics in all aspects of manufacturing processes.

The demand for electro-mechanical technicians who can operate, program and repair robots is increasing at an astronomical rate.[3] This is where Lakeshore Technical College set out to make the next meaningful difference through MicroMatch Upskilling.

Focusing on upskilling incumbent workers, LTC partnered with employers like Sargento Foods, Bemis Manufacturing, Rockline Industries, and Lakeside Foods to define the ideal skill set of electro-mechanical technicians. In a traditional model, a college would use this information to create a credit-based associate degree program. Students would apply for admission, wait for the next semester to begin, and complete classes over the course of several years. But our region is at statistical full-employment and manufacturers needed workers today – not in two years.

So LTC deployed scientifically-validated aptitude tests to incumbent workers to identify very specific skills gaps within a company's existing workforce. Utilizing the results of those aptitude tests, LTC created five, short-term training seminars designed to fill the gaps. Ranging from 8 to 24 hours, these non-credit seminars could be individually-selected and stacked. Workers could complete only those seminars needed to upskill. In some cases, this would be all five seminars, three seminars, or just one seminar.

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[1] Source: The Wisconsin Economic Future Study (https://www.wmep.org/report-study/the-wisconsin-economic-future-study-statewide-and-regional-analysis/)

[2] Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Intl. (EMSI, www.economicmodeling.com)

[3] Source: The NEW Manufacturing Alliance 2018 Manufacturing Vitality Index Study (http://newmfgalliance.org/media/1987/2018vitalitystudy.pdf)

By pairing the hands-on assessment results with laser-focused training design, and aligning the training modules to job roles and functions, there is zero waste when the employee leaves the worksite for training. A worker is trained only in the skills he or she needs – there is no redundancy and there are multiple on- and off-ramps.

No longer is education at LTC a one-size-fits-all approach, with two-year degree programs the only option for career advancement. When LTC deployed this workforce training blueprint for robotics, just under 100 incumbent workers were trained within four months. LTC will continue to work with those students who want to continue their training and pursue a traditional associate degree by applying credit for prior learning (CPL) to ensure they receive college credit for the non-credit training already completed. This saves students time and money.

All of this is great news for manufacturing employees who are able to take advantage of employer-funded training to advance in their companies. But there are many, many more people who could benefit from this model of training, and employers who desperately need skilled workers.

Short-term, non-credit training programs are currently not eligible for federal financial aid, making it nearly impossible for an otherwise qualified worker in a low-paying service or general labor job to pay for training out of his or her own pocket. Yet, this type of streamlined training would be a perfect fit for underskilled, adult workers who want a career change, allowing them to customize a short-term training package which combines their current talents with only those training seminars needed to fill high-wage, high-demand jobs.

A critical next step for LTC will be to find alternative sources of student funding through private donors, foundations, or grants. We believe we can make a strong case to support the expansion of MicroMatch Upskilling offerings which benefit the underskilled, employers, and our communities.

LTC's venture into MicroMatch Upskilling has been a success for the nearly 100 workers trained, our area employers, and our entire community. However, this type of aptitude-based, customized training does not appear on LTC's college scorecard and is not reported to IPEDS. While graduation rate may be an appropriate indicator for some colleges based on their unique role, scope, and mission, the nearly 100 workers trained and upskilled through this program are not captured by this standard college metric.

On behalf of the students, employers, and communities LTC serves, thank you for your support of career and technical education and thank you for allowing me to speak today. I look forward to any questions you may have.

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Appendix

Close to 1,000 students graduate from LTC each year, and LTC's associate degree graduates earn a median starting salary of $47,000 per year. In addition to the Cleveland campus, LTC serves students in Manitowoc and Sheboygan, and offers classes at four additional sites throughout the district. Visit LTC at gotoltc.edu.