August 15, 2016

Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

Attn: High Priority Occupations

651 Boas Street, Room 220

Harrisburg, PA 17121-0001

Dear CWIA Director:

As a business involved in the forestry industry in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we want to express our support in adding the following occupations to the **Statewide WDA** High Priority Occupations List:

* 19-1032 Foresters
* 45-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Logging Workers
* 45-4023 Log Graders and Scalers
* 45-4022 Logging Equipment Operators
* 45-4021 Fallers
* 51-9198 Helpers – Production Worker

We verify that our industry has at least 37 openings for **Logging Equipment Operators (45-4022) and Fallers (45-4021)** for each of the next three years. The average annual wage for these jobs is $15.00. These occupations are essential for an industry still trying to recover from a talent shortage as a result of people moving to oil and gas jobs over the last five years.

While this number of openings may fall below the statewide benchmark, these are entry level occupations that many people use to start their agriculture career. With additional training in grading, forestry, and/or supervision, the employers that we represent will promote or re-hire these workers as **Log Graders and Scalers and First-Line Supervisors of Logging Workers** with average pay of $16.77 and $23.44, respectively.

From there they can continue their training and education to become **Foresters (19-1032)** which employers pay an average wage of $29.40.

At sawmills the entry level **Helpers – Production Workers (51-9198)** is a position that is extremely problematic to fill. While the average pay of this position may be lower, it is here where employees show their work ethic and responsibility which leads to promotions within the company to many other higher paying careers.

The demand for trained workers continues to grow in the Commonwealthand a pipeline of skilled workers needs to be established to address the changing workforce. We strongly support the addition of these occupations to the statewide High Priority List so state and federal funds can be expended in these occupations allowing schools to receive funds to support these programs and to be eligible for grant funding opportunities.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at: