



Testimony

of Jennifer McNelly

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The Manufacturing Institute

before the Joint Economic Committee

on Women in Manufacturing

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COMMENTS OF THE MANUFACTURING INSTITUTE

BEFORE THE

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

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Chairman Brady, Vice-Chair Klobuchar, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to testify on behalf of The Manufacturing Institute at this hearing on “Women in Manufacturing.”

My name is Jennifer McNelly, and I am the President of the Manufacturing Institute. We are the non-profit affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and we are the authority on the attraction, qualification, and development of world-class manufacturing talent.

A recent survey from Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute found that over 80 percent of American manufacturing companies have a moderate to severe shortage of available, qualified workers. Manufacturing companies cannot fill as many as 600,000 skilled positions, even as unemployment numbers hover at historically high levels. Meanwhile, there’s one obvious source of human capital that the manufacturing industry has not fully tapped: women. Across all manufacturing sectors in the U.S., women are underrepresented in the workforce. While women represent nearly half (46.6 percent) of the total U.S. labor force, they only comprise a quarter (24.8 percent) of the durable goods manufacturing workforce. The proportion of women in leadership roles in manufacturing companies also lags behind other U.S. industries.

In 2012, Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute set out to understand why manufacturing isn’t attracting, retaining, and advancing its fair share of talented women. We surveyed more than 600 women in manufacturing, across functional roles and levels, to gain their perspectives on how effectively their companies recruit, retain, and advance women. We conducted one-on-one interviews with more than a dozen women in a range of roles from senior leadership to individual contributors to gain their insights on human capital and talent development in the manufacturing industry.

Today I would like to highlight two of the most consistent responses given by the women interviewed: sponsorship and personal development.

Sponsorship

Women who were successful in manufacturing often looked at their career choices and credited a sponsor for undertaking responsibility their development and professional progression. A sponsor extends beyond mentoring and coaching to being a vocal advocate, thereby enhancing their sponsor’s presence in the organization. Recent research shows that individuals who have the active support of sponsors within their organization are more likely to advance in their careers. Sponsorship confers a statistical benefit of up to 30 percent in terms of more stretch assignments, promotions, and pay increases.

To encourage this goal, this year The Manufacturing Institute sponsored the first annual Science, Technology, Engineering and Production - STEP - awards to celebrate women in manufacturing. The STEP initiative this year honored 122 women – from the front-line to the C-suite from manufacturing companies of all sizes and all across the country - who have demonstrated excellence and leadership in their manufacturing careers. We were able to

celebrate exciting careers in and continue to ensure new opportunities for women in the manufacturing industry. Women in manufacturing need, and our Honorees are, successful role models to empower today's current manufacturing leaders to help inspire the next-generation of leadership and talent.

We have one of our own STEP Honorees with us today to share her story, Darlene Miller from Permac Industries, located in Minnesota. Darlene is one of these impressive 122 Honorees. Many of our other STEP Honorees, just like Darlene, have served as exceptional leaders in the manufacturing industry.

For example, Natalie Genova, Senior Project Manager, Integrated Supply Chain at Honeywell International, has not only served as a leader in the manufacturing industry, creating a best-in-class training, onboarding and leadership development program, but she advocates for and participates in mentorship programs. Natalie frequently attests to the importance of mentorship, supported by her own mentoring relationship she had with her supervisor, DonnaLee Scaggs. The impact this relationship had on Natalie has led her to serve as a mentor herself, recognizing that it is a critical component to building the company's talent pipeline.

Promote personal development

In addition to powerful mentors and role models, women also cited professional development as a priority for success. Successful manufacturing organizations today provide potential talent with a clear understanding of the behaviors, capabilities and experiences required for roles and positions) and help talent build out an experiential based development plan. This should include: identifying the challenging assignments, roles and experiences that will help them close the gaps, and providing them with the opportunity and backing to take on these stretch assignments.

To that end, The Manufacturing Institute identified a series of nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials based specifically on employer-identified skills. These credentials, in use by companies across the country, clearly lay out the training required to certify that an individual possesses the basic skills necessary for a career in manufacturing. By clearly identifying the next level of success through a credential and training, employees are aware of exactly what is necessary for advancement and success.

In fact, one of our own STEP Honorees is one of the most certified welders in the industry today. Karen Gilgenbach, Weld Process Specialist for Airgas USA, LLC in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a Certified Welding Supervisor and a Certified Robotic Arc Welding Technician, both offered through the American Welding Society. Karen pursued additional training and education to achieve these certifications to not only increase her skill set, but to also validate her skill set.

Much of this training is done through community and technical colleges – education platforms that are uniquely situated to provide this type of training. This also supports more on and off ramps in education, which facilitates an individual's ability to obtain schooling when their professional career requires it and also positions them to earn while they learn, applying what they learn in class at night on the job the next day. For many years, postsecondary success was defined as a four-year degree, whereas a valid, industry-based credential can provide the knowledge and skills for a well-paying job and a solid middle-class lifestyle, establishing a strong base with a potential to grow.

Conclusion

Manufacturers across the country are beginning to realize that women are an untapped resource. However, retaining and nurturing that skilled talent can be a challenge in a traditionally non-female work environment. Our research has shown that identifying sponsors as well as providing clear career training pathways vastly improves retention and success opportunities for women in manufacturing, and I hope that we can work with you in the future to promote these goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with you to build the next manufacturing workforce generation.

