



Machine Specialties Inc. 6511 Franz Warner Parkway
Whitsett, N.C. 27377
P: (336) 603-1919
F: (336) 603-1920
www.machspec.com

Written Testimony
Committee on Small Business
Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce
“Small Business participation in apprenticeship programs”
United States House of Representatives

Delivered by Tammy Simmons

Machine Specialties Inc.

Vice President Marketing & Culture

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Machine Specialties or MSI, is an advanced manufacturing company in Greensboro, NC that makes precision parts for aerospace, satellite, medical, energy and other industries. Celebrating our 50th year in business next year, it is exciting to see how our small business started with one man who was a trained machining apprentice and an immigrant from Argentina has grown to 150 employees.

Similar to other advanced manufacturing companies, MSI employees are highly skilled and many are nearing retirement. We have tried different ways to recruit employees with skills or give current employees up-skill training to maintain a consistent level of highly trained employees and to grow our company. Our company’s growth is limited to the amount of skilled employees who have experience, can set up the advanced equipment and make the type of products our customers need.





MSI was introduced to a youth apprenticeship model by several companies in Charlotte, the consortium of companies called Apprenticeship 2000 have been using it for 22 years. Learning the details of this program and how to start one from another business member was extremely helpful. We learned that any size company could do this and use apprenticeships as a way of growing the amount of employees in the highest skilled or trade positions. By joining a group of other businesses we could share the workload, offset some risks and attain some buying power with the schools system and community colleges.

Youth apprenticeship programs have been exploding in NC over the past five years. Currently there are at least ten different consortiums. Each apprenticeship consortium may range from having anywhere from 6- 26 member companies. The size of the companies range from 15 employees at a company up to larger international companies with over 5,000 employees. It is valuable that these programs can be adapted to meet both small business needs as well as mid – large size business needs.

The basics of the model is that we recruit juniors and seniors in high school that have good attendance, a decent GPA, solid math grades and an interest in building creating and fixing. Some have identified a desire to work with their hands or becoming an engineer. The students receive a 100% paid two year degree from a community college, paid on the job training, Journey person card from DOL and benefits from the company. The process is about 3 ½ -4 years for them to complete the training /work hours and formal education required. The apprentices are even paid for the hours they are at college earning their 2 year degree. The careers the apprentices are training for all well paying, in great demand and highly skilled. Careers that once students finish the apprenticeship they would be able to find work almost anywhere in the country. Most companies will support the apprentice in completing a 4 year degree if they want to and it is mutually beneficial to the company. Currently our small business, MSI



has 15 apprentices with careers in Tool & Die, Maintenance Technician, Setup CNC Machinist, Welders and Quality Technicians. In the three years since we have started our program we have had great success and plan on growing our business with on- boarding another 20 apprentices this coming year.

The consortium of business partners MSI belongs to is called GAP, which stands for Guilford Apprenticeship Partners. Guilford County is where these businesses are all located. The first year GAP started with 6 companies interested in apprentices, the second year there were 11, and the third year we have 26 business partners. In this third year we started a new track for Field Technicians that includes trade positions for apprentices in HVAC, Electrical and Plumbing. Next year we will be starting a track in Aviation for Apprentices. There has also been interest and discussions with companies who may offer apprenticeships in Healthcare, IT and Automotive & Diesel Technicians. We hope to be able to implement these new tracks in the next 3 years, and some of them may do so with adult apprentices.

The excitement and success of these programs has allowed us to aide other counties and communities in starting their own consortiums and working with the school systems and community colleges. MSI has assisted in starting apprenticeship groups in counties that border Guilford and is an active member of Rockingham County's consortium, RockAtop and recruits apprentices from there also. Good collaboration on these programs sets the businesses and students up for success. A winning outcome for business and a winning outcome for the school systems is a tremendous win for the community as a whole. MSI and GAP are happy to testify so that lawmakers can learn what a great opportunity the programs are and how they support stronger skilled workforces, educate and train students for successful careers. It is our hope that apprenticeships will be implemented in other areas across the country, other sectors and that general awareness of apprenticeships will increase with students, parents, educators, and business owners.