Western Smokehouse Partners

Western Smokehouse Partners' Experience with the 260E Program

Western Smokehouse Partners' decision to expand in Burlington was driven by several factors, including the community's strong workforce and the strategic location between our facilities in Galesburg, Illinois, and Greentop, Missouri. The availability of Iowa's 260E New Jobs Training Program further strengthened the business case for investment in Burlington by providing a valuable workforce development partnership that supported our growth.

Through our partnership with Southeastern Community College, we were able to train employees in areas critical to our operation, including food safety, quality assurance, equipment operation, production processes, and workplace safety. The program helped us build the skilled workforce needed to support continued expansion while maintaining the high standards expected by our customers. It was especially helpful when we opened the plant. This was our first "start up" plant and we were able to bring in the necessary training resources prior to opening to ensure our brand-new workforce was successfully trained on equipment operations.

One of the strengths of the 260E program has been its flexibility. As our business grew, the program allowed us to develop employees and respond to workforce needs without adding significant financial pressure during periods of expansion. At this time we have completed 2 additional expansions, and the 260E program has been a big factor in our decision to expand in Burlington. The current program design continues to influence our decisions on future plant builds. A state that supports new businesses and gives them the best chance at success is extremely important when making decisions on location.

The changes proposed under HF 2799 raise concerns for growing employers. Limiting eligible training activities and requiring a 30% employer match before training funds can be accessed creates additional upfront costs at the same time companies are investing in facilities, equipment, and workforce growth. These changes may reduce the effectiveness of a program that has helped Iowa attract and retain employers.

The 260E program has been a valuable tool for workforce development and business growth. We encourage policymakers to preserve the flexibility and accessibility that have made the program successful for employers investing in Iowa communities like Burlington.

Sincerely,

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