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New Report Shows How U.S. Companies Boost Employee Education

April 22, 2015 - Washington, D.C. - Today, the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) released a report highlighting how companies in Detroit, Memphis, New York City, and Miami are helping employees advance their education. The report, “The Role of Business in Promoting Educational Attainment,” was featured in a panel discussion at the organization’s Spring Policy Conference in Washington, D.C.

The publication was produced as part of Lumina Foundation’s “Goal 2025” effort to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates, and other credentials to 60% by 2025. It is accompanied by two city-specific briefs – one on Detroit and one on Memphis – that delve deeper into workforce initiatives in each region. All findings are based on focus groups and interviews conducted with representatives from small, family-owned firms and global Fortune 500 companies, as well as business-education support intermediaries.

“When employees acquire more education, not only do their incomes typically rise, so does their companies’ productivity,” said Carl Camden, CEO of Kelly Services and Co-Chair of CED’s Education Subcommittee. “But today, well under half of working-age Americans have recognized degrees. This report on how some companies are making educational headway both internally and externally will inspire other businesses to follow suit.”

The publications feature various policies and practices for increasing workers’ education, such as partnerships between companies and colleges, collaborations with local governments and economic development organizations, and internal company initiatives. Select examples include:

- **CVS Health’s** Workforce Initiatives department targets hiring in communities with high unemployment rates and with programs that have moved individuals on public assistance into entry-level positions. The company also provides career options through training and academic assistance for entry-level employees to earn certification as pharmacy technicians.
- **FedEx** partners with nearly 20 higher education institutions, with arrangements that include delayed billing to relieve employees of having to finance courses upfront. They also offer an online e-learning platform with courses for job advancement or personal growth, many of which are eligible for college credit.
- **Made in Memphis** is a partnership between the Memphis Workforce Investment Network, the Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce, the mayors of Memphis and Shelby County, and Southwest Tennessee Community College. Together, they help to meet the hiring needs of local manufacturing companies, and ensure that local job seekers have the skills needed to be hired for such positions.

Equally important, the report and supplementary briefs detail key challenges that employers face in helping to improve their workers’ level of knowledge and skill sets, including the barriers that

employees face in pursuing additional educational opportunities. All three publications document the strategic role that the city can play in workforce development planning efforts.

Select report recommendations include the following:

- **Employers** should support educational benefits to their employees, as this can be the determining factor in whether or not an employee earns a degree or credential.
- **Policymakers and city leaders** aiming to boost educational attainment should facilitate partnerships between higher education and employers, and support innovative ways in that companies can support their employee education and skill development.
- **Postsecondary institutions** should ensure that the cost of credential or degree attainment is affordable, and support working students to degree completion.

The multi-year project and resulting report was made possible through a generous grant from Lumina Foundation. The report and executive summary can be viewed [here](#), the brief on Detroit can be viewed [here](#), and the brief on Memphis can be viewed [here](#). An infographic by CED on how the U.S. skills gap can be closed to make the country more competitive can be viewed [here](#).

About the Committee for Economic Development

Founded in 1942, the Committee for Economic Development of The Conference Board (CED) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization that delivers well-researched analysis and reasoned solutions to our nation's most critical issues. CED's work is grounded on seven core principles: sustainable capitalism, long-term economic growth, efficient fiscal and regulatory policy, competitive and open markets, a globally competitive workforce, equal economic opportunity, and nonpartisanship in the nation's interest. Learn more at www.ced.org.

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