

February 10, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

On behalf of Beene Garter LLP, I would like to express our appreciation for the workforce development services provided by West Michigan Works! Beene Garter LLP is West Michigan's largest independently owned accounting and consulting firm, providing tax, audit, accounting outsourcing services, and more to area businesses since 1949. With 16 partners and approximately 80 staff, we have earned our reputation as trusted business advisors by helping our clients stay one step ahead and anticipating their needs. Building and maintaining a first class, expert workforce is critical for our continued success.

I connected with West Michigan Works! because I needed assistance with On the Job training for our new hires. Although at times we are able to find the experienced talent that we seek, oftentimes there is significant training required in order to insure the employee's success in their new role. For example, we were excited to offer three of our new hires in 2019 full-time roles in our Retirement Plan Services department utilizing the Going Pro Training Funds to help support their On the Job training.

Two of our new hires fell into the Older Worker category, including one worker who had been unable to find a position that adequately reflected his many years of experience in the Retirement Plan Services area after his job was eliminated at another company. When he interviewed with us, he was underemployed outside his field, and we were able to bring him into the fold at Beene Garter to utilize his significant previous experience in his field, using the Going Pro Talent Fund award to provide training specific to our processes and systems.

In another example in that same department, we were able to hire and train a new college graduate who had no experience in the Retirement Plan Services field at all. As a business/psychology major, our new employee hadn't been sure of her future professional direction, but with the On the Job training funds, we were able to train her as a Retirement Plan Administrator and give her a promising professional career within the year! Last year, Michigan Works! helped me reach my goal of filling three critical roles in our Retirement Plan Services department, which is a very specialized, niche area for which it is difficult to recruit talent.

My company has benefited by working with West Michigan Works! because significant training is required to bring new hires "up to speed" in their new positions, particularly if they have used different processes or software in the past, or if they have not worked in the field before. What I find most valuable about partnering with West Michigan

Works! is the support we have received to make our workforce prepared to provide exceptional service to our clients with their accounting-related needs, which in turn helps our clients to grow their businesses as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kimberly Benac", is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Kimberly S. Benac  
Director of Human Resources  
(616) 235-2077

