

**Hearing Title: Helping Americans Get Back to Work: Implementation of the  
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

**Written Testimony of Mr. Heath Berlin  
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**Before the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
U.S. House of Representatives**

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In March 2012, I was employed by Resilience Technology Corporation (RTC), a manufacturer of network security appliances (Firewalls). I was employed as a System Engineer to provide system administration, network security, research and development and customer support to our global client base.

On December 31, 2015, RTC was Acquired by Integrata Security. On February 1, 2016 all employees were laid off. I was recalled two weeks later, promoted to Senior System Engineer and then was again laid off May 16, 2016.

In July 2016, I registered for the August workshop at the Arnold, MD office of Anne Arundel Workforce development. At the workshop, I was accepted into the WIOA program. I qualified for the program because I was receiving unemployment benefits. I met with Karla Wynn who helped me obtain funding for additional education and exams: EC-Council Certified Ethical Hacker and exam, and vouchers for the Comp-TIA Security and Network + exams.

I further met with Carl Kushinsky who helped me focus my resume and provided me with interviewing practice. Between September and December 2016, I studied and completed the exams and interviewed regularly for as many positions as I could, via telephone, video conference and in person, all without success.

One of the companies I interviewed with during this period was Phalanx Secure Solutions, a company which provided monitored security through the use of imbedded IDS devices in their customer's networks. They also had a need to provide firewall management and implementation and forensic analysis (I am an AcesoData and BlackLight Certified Examiner, as well as a DoD-DC3 certified Forensic Incident Responder).

Phalanx was a startup which had recently expanded and did not have funds to bring me on at the time.

By December, I was out of unemployment benefits and still had no job. Carl Kushinski introduced me to Alfredo Quiroga "Q", who I met at an introductory meeting at the Glen Burnie MD AAWDC, who advised me of the Maryland Technology Connection MTC. I

was advised of the testing regiment, which included aptitude, ability/education, business ethics/situational intelligence, and the random assignment of treatment.

December 5, 2016, I completed the testing as was assigned to the treatment group for the December 12<sup>th</sup> workshop.

I found the workshop very valuable in its holistic approach. The focus was not only practical in the sense that it was goal driven to finding the participants jobs, but also that it addressed the anxiety, anger and frustration of being unemployed for a long period and feeling stuck.

All of the participants were close in age (mostly over 40) and had similar job searching experience. The program helped manage the distractions of unemployment so as to allow us to focus on planning and execution to get employed.

One of the most valuable tools the program provided (at least in my case) was funding, which could be used for education or as an incentive to a prospective employer to hire a participant.

Not knowing all of the details of the “Earn and Learn” program, I reached back out to Phalanx and explained the program I was in and how there might be funding for them to help pay my salary. They immediately agreed to talk with the MTC to learn more and work out the details.

I advised Q of this possibility on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>. He then put me in touch with my Industry Navigator, Aggie Nteta. I met with Aggie to discuss the prospect. I, of course, wanted to jump right in with all of the funding available and get back to work. Fortunately, Aggie’s deliberateness prevented me from using all the funding as an incentive for Phalanx so that I could use half for additional education: CISSP Bootcamp and Exam, and Amazon Web Services Systems Operations and Certification Exam.

Phalanx, after consulting with Aggie (the Industry Navigator), wanted me to start right after the Holidays. However, since Aggie was only one of three Navigators statewide, the coordination took a little longer.

By January 18, 2017 I was employed full time as a Security Analyst at Phalanx Secure Solutions – less than a month after starting the program. By March, I was promoted to Director of Security Operations. (Security analysts work in the SOC-the Secure Operations Center. The DOC is the SOC lead who interfaces with the customers to provide alerts and recommend remediation.)

While looking for employment during my time at the program, I had applied on USAJobs for a position at the Naval Health Clinic Annapolis. I interviewed for the position while things were being finalized with Phalanx. I was then advised, via an email from USAJobs, that I had not been selected for the position Information Assurance Manager at NHC Annapolis.

In April, Aggie's wisdom came into play as Phalanx had run into cash flow issues – as startups sometimes do. Fortunately, I had been paid the MTC funding and was engaged in my AWS course when I received a call from the Naval Health Clinic Annapolis telling me that I had actually been selected for the IA Manger position.

My AWS and CISSP exam preparation continued through May 26, 2017 and I reported to NHC Annapolis on May 30, 2017. I am completely certain that I would not have been selected for this position had it not been for the funding provided by AAWDC and the MTC to pursue the additional education and preparations. They led me to the job at Phalanx, which in turn prepared me for the NHC Annapolis.

They have been a great help and service in getting me moving towards prosperity again! Everyone I worked with there was extremely professional and I appreciate all of their hard work, but then again I really hope to not ever need their services again.