

Testimony of Dr. Annette Parker

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Hearing in Our Nation of Builders: Powering

U.S. Automobile Manufacturing Forward

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, MANUFACTURING AND TRADE

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Thank you Chairman Terry, ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Dr. Annette Parker and I am the Executive Director of the Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative (AMTEC) at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). I am proud to be here today to share our story and to discuss how we can all further support automobile manufacturing in the United States.

In order for the United States to keep its leadership position or competitiveness in the global economy, the workforce must keep pace with the knowledge and innovation in advanced automotive manufacturing and other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. The Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative (AMTEC) was created because education leaders at KCTCS and other states came together and recognized that a key challenge for automotive manufacturers would be maintaining a flexible workforce and developing new worker competencies that would enable automakers to maintain high performance work organizations that create jobs and value-added products and services. We recognized that highly skilled engineers are part of the solution, but a need also existed in middle-skilled (mid-level) workers and technicians in advanced automotive manufacturing. These types of workers generally have an associate degree or industry-recognized postsecondary credential, yet institutions of higher education are not producing the number of students needed by employers. These types of workers also need the fundamental skills that are common across all of the automotive companies, a basis for the development of the AMTEC Center. The automakers have shared with us that they need work-ready employees with the basic skills to whom they can then provide specific company training.

In order to meet industry needs AMTEC has recognized that the automotive industry requires uniquely trained employees to support:

- Increasingly flexible and lean manufacturing line;
- Fluctuating customers demands;
- A growing focus on green manufacturing; and
- Rapidly improving technology

In response to these industry demands, AMTEC offers:

- Industry-endorsed maintenance certification assessments;

- Validated college curriculum aligned to industry-endorsed skills standards;
- Shared best practices and educational models among colleges and industry partners; and
- Flexible career pathways to fit the unique needs of students, employees, and employers.

AMTEC through the leadership of the Kentucky Community & Technical College System built a collaboration of approximately 35 community colleges and automakers in 12 states to build consensus in the development of national standards for multi-skilled maintenance/mechatronics technicians for the automotive manufacturing sector; development of competency measurements tools to assess knowledge skills and abilities of incumbent and future STEM technicians; the development of career pathway models that follow key success factors in order to create a pipeline for the future workforce; and AMTEC academies to convene key stakeholders to share best practices and learn and grow from each other.

Through the development of standards, competency-based modularized curriculum and assessments, AMTEC has created a unique collaboration of industry and colleges that provide education of workers prized by the industry. In 2011, the National Governors Association (NGA), through case study, selected AMTEC as a model and National Best Practice. NGA states that “The AMTEC story shows that it is possible for governors to work collaboratively with industry, with community colleges, and with each other to provide people with the opportunity to build their technical skills and ensure both America’s future prosperity and their own economic security”, (A Sharper Focus On Technical Workers, How to Educate and Train for the Global Economy, Martin, et. al. 2010).

AMTEC is at the forefront of education because the future involves a very different kind of technical worker, a very different kind of partnership, and a very different kind of education. As a collaborative we are excited about the future as we work with K-12 educators, community colleges, automotive manufacturers and suppliers to ignite our students’ interests, and educate them to compete in a global economy; and accelerate them into the workplace to become competent, well-educated STEM workers in the advanced automotive and manufacturing industry. AMTEC academy events have been successful in convening college and industry stakeholders to learn and grow from locally specific best practices. As a matter of fact, the next AMTEC academy is hosted by Nissan and the Tennessee Technology Center in Smyrna, Tennessee April 11 & 12, 2013.

Recommendations from AMTEC would include continued funding and support of collaborative efforts across the automotive sector and other sectors that drive industry supported national standards and assessments. We recommend the expansion of collaborations that engage K-12, higher education, industry, and government entities. The National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education funds have been critical to the development and success of AMTEC and similar centers of excellence that need to have continued support and funding. Finally, these efforts should be national in scope and therefore

cross local, regional, and state lines to increase collaboration and effectiveness while reducing duplication of funds and efforts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I look forward to your questions.