

Samuel J. Schaeffer

Summary of Qualifications

Results-driven and visionary leader with 20+ years of experience in the non-profit and public sectors, specializing in criminal justice, workforce development, and nonprofit effectiveness. Proven experience creating strategies that scale and increase the operational and financial sustainability of nonprofit organizations. Skillful advocate in organizing multi-stakeholder coalitions that create policy and systems change. Exemplary fundraising track-record, generating revenue from government, foundation, corporate, earned-income and individual donor streams. Seasoned public speaker, commenter in the media, and writer, with experience testifying before Congress (House and Senate).

Professional Experience

Center for Employment Opportunities

Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director | 2014 - Present

- Expanded CEO from serving 2,500 individuals in a single NY site to 10,000 across 31 cities in 12 states.
- Grew organizational revenue from \$21.5M in FY14 to \$110M in FY24.
- Led expansion of Finance, Legal, HR, and IT departments; hired leadership, implemented policies, and developed systems as staff grew from 150 to 650 employees.
- Secured high-profile 7- and 8-figure gifts from major funders, including The Ballmer Group, Blue Meridian Partners, and The Sergey Brin Family Foundation; received a \$25M grant from Mackenzie Scott in 2023.
- Established CEO as a key player in reentry and workforce policy at federal, state, and local levels; testified before the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Agriculture Committee.
- Navigated COVID-19 challenges, ensuring business continuity, aggressively fundraising, and preventing layoffs while increasing staff salaries.
- Spearheaded the nation's first cash assistance program for returning citizens, raising over \$32M and distributing aid to 10,000+ individuals.
- Launched the White House-featured **Constituent Voice** initiative, enhancing participant feedback mechanisms.

Executive Director, CEO National | 2010 - 2014

- Led expansion efforts, launching CEO's first offices outside NYC in multiple states.

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- Developed and executed a fund development plan, including new sales training and tracking systems.
- Managed an \$8M annual budget for national operations.
- Strengthened human capital development across all national offices.
- Designed a performance management system to improve program quality and contract compliance.

Chief Business Development Officer | 2009 - 2010

- Co-authored CEO's 2011-2014 Business Plan, guiding strategic expansion and policy initiatives.
- Secured over \$10M in public and private growth capital to support CEO's multi-state expansion.

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer

Director of Economic Development | 2006 - 2009

- Drafted the Senator's **Urban Policy Agenda**, proposing workforce and juvenile justice programs.
- Led economic development efforts across New York State, including job expansion initiatives.
- Managed federal oversight of the World Trade Center rebuilding project.
- Advised on high-profile corporate acquisitions impacting NY jobs and industries.
- Formulated aviation policies adopted by the FAA to ease NYC airport congestion.

Special Assistant | 2005 - 2006

- Coordinated Senator's statewide travel, press events, and logistics.

New York State Assemblyman Vito J. Lopez

Chief of Staff | 2001 - 2004

- Coordinated large-scale affordable housing projects, including a 500+ unit brownfield redevelopment in Brooklyn.
- Led successful community campaigns on land use and zoning reform.

Education

Reed College

Bachelor of Arts in Religion | Phi Beta Kappa | Presidential Award for Academic Excellence

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Publications

- Schaeffer, S. & Garcia, I. (2021). "How \$24M in Cash Grants Provided a Lifeline for Returning Citizens During the Pandemic." *The Crime Report*.
 - Schaeffer, S. (2017). "We Need a Long-Term Plan for Reducing Reincarcerations." *The Hill*.
[Read Here](#)
 - Schaeffer, S., Shumway, J., & Reimers-Brumme, C. (2015). "After Pay for Success: Doubling Down on What Works." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.
[Read Here](#)
 - Schaeffer, S. (2014). "Assessing Nonprofit Risk in Pay for Success Deals." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.
[Read Here](#)
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Boards and Affiliations

- **NYS Governor's Re-Entry Council**, Council Member (2015 - Present)
- **Democracy Prep Public Schools**, Board Member (2015 - 2020)
- **Results for America**, What Works Nonprofit Fellow, Inaugural Class (2017 - 2019)
- **Irvine Foundation**, Evaluation Advisory Committee (2020 - 2021)
- **Kresge Foundation**, NextGen Advisory Board (2017 - 2019)

Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5)* of the *Rules of the House of Representatives*, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form electronically by filling in the provided blanks.

Committee: _____

Subcommittee: _____

Hearing Date: _____

Hearing :

Witness Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Witness Type: ☐ Governmental ☐ Non-governmental

Are you representing yourself or an organization? ☐ Self ☐ Organization

If you are representing an organization, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

FOR WITNESSES APPEARING IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL CAPACITY

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

Are you a fiduciary—including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent—of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing? If so, please list the name of the organization(s) or entities.

Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) related to the hearing's subject matter that you or the organization(s) you represent have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

Please list any contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government and related to the hearing's subject that you or the organization(s) you represent have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the amount and country of origin of each contract or payment.

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

- ☐ I have attached a written statement of proposed testimony.
- ☐ I have attached my curriculum vitae or biography.

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5), of the U.S. House of Representatives provides:

(5)(A) Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof.

(B) In the case of a witness appearing in a non-governmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include— (i) a curriculum vitae; (ii) a disclosure of any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (iii) a disclosure of whether the witness is a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The disclosure referred to in subdivision (B)(ii) shall include— (i) the amount and source of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (ii) the amount and country of origin of any payment or contract related to the subject matter of the hearing originating with a foreign government.

(D) Such statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the privacy or security of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness appears.

California Dept of Social Services SNAP E&T Statewide, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30, 2023, \$7,128,368. Oct 1 2023-Sept 30, 2024, \$7,464,564. Oct 1 2024-Sept 30, 2025, \$7,980,243
Colorado Dept of Human Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$1,049,400; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$1,507,157; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$1,297,905.
Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$359,309; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$423,624; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$453,235
Goodwill of North Georgia, Inc., SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30, 2023 \$283,630; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30, 2024 \$290,187; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30, 2025, \$282,687
Kentucky Dept of Community Based Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30, 2024, \$407,050; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2026, \$806,150
Louisiana Dept of Children and Family Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$565,221; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$540,647; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$583,079
New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$500,000; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$500,000; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$500,000
North Carolina Dept of Health and Human Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$440,311; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$442,894
Ohio Dept of Jobs and Family Services SNAP E&T, Jul 1 2023-Jun 30 2024, \$1,552,013; Jul 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$2,254,388
Oklahoma Dept of Human Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$2,237,787; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$2,830,303; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$3,163,240
Pennsylvania Dept of Human Services SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$1,808,349; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$1,839,356; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$2,850,984
REDF USDA SNAP E&T Partnerships Grant, Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2026, \$333,332
San Diego Workforce Partnership, SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2023-Sept 30, 2024, \$1,804,207; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30, 2025, \$1,787,333
Southeast Michigan Community Alliance SNAP E&T, Jan 1 2023-Sept 30 2023, \$25,250; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$107,531; Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$206,174
Tennessee Dept of Labor and Workforce Development SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2022-Sept 30 2023, \$286,871; Oct 1 2023-Sept 30 2024, \$442,894
United Way of Nashville SNAP E&T, Oct 1 2024-Sept 30 2025, \$242,896

Testimony of Sam Schaeffer
Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Employment Opportunities

Before the House Committee on Agriculture
The Power of Work: Expanding Opportunity through SNAP
April 8, 2025

Good morning Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the value of SNAP Employment and Training, or “SNAP E&T”, and how nutrition benefits coupled with job training can address both short term hunger and long term self-sufficiency while stimulating the economy. My name is Sam Schaeffer and I lead the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) which provides jobs for individuals returning from incarceration. In 30 cities across 12 states, CEO guarantees immediate daily pay and advanced training to help every participant get a quality full time job. When more people are employed in quality jobs, we create a foundation for strong businesses and an economy where everyone can thrive.

The SNAP E&T program helps meet the needs of individuals with barriers to employment - not just formerly incarcerated people, but hundreds of thousands of others experiencing hardship. Through SNAP E&T 50/50, organizations such as CEO that provide E&T activities are reimbursed up to 50 percent of the cost of delivering these services to SNAP recipients if the services are initially paid for by non-federal dollars.

After release, more than 8,000 motivated people choose to walk through a CEO front door in states like Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Michigan and North Carolina every year. For context, more than 500,000 individuals nationally return from prison annually. It's a time of hope and renewal. Yet most people will have difficulty covering the costs of basic needs such as food and a home. Add on expenses for transportation or new clothes for job interviews and it's virtually impossible to achieve long-term stability without some support. Recent reports show that individuals with prior incarceration are twice as likely to experience food insecurity¹ and 60 percent of people who have been incarcerated are persistently unemployed up to a year after their release.²

Recognizing this gap and the need for high quality training, Congress strengthened SNAP E&T in the 2018 Farm Bill by allowing paid training opportunities as an allowable activity under SNAP E&T for the first time. This provision benefits the people we serve at CEO, along with thousands more struggling financially to make ends meet. It means people can receive SNAP and also take part in an apprenticeship or work a transitional job to hone their skills - often their first job. Those food benefits offer a lifeline, while E&T services become a bridge to lasting independence.

¹ Prison Policy Initiative, “Food Insecurity is Rising, and Incarceration Puts Families at Risk,” <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/02/10/food-insecurity/>.

Just Leadership USA, “Building the Table,” <https://jllusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/jcc-landscape-report.pdf>.

² Prison Policy Initiative, “New Data on Formerly Incarcerated People's Employment Reveal Labor Market Injustices,” <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/02/08/employment/>.

This approach works. Independent evaluations show that CEO participants are 48 percent more likely to be employed after three-years.³ Further, CEO also couples work-based learning with opportunities to earn advanced credentials, such as a commercial drivers license. At CEO, participants who couple a transitional job with an advanced credential increase their earnings post E&T participation by 30 percent.

There are many employment social enterprises beyond CEO doing this work and connecting individuals to various high demand industries. For example, our peers in Nebraska, No More Empty Pots, offer access to a paid culinary training program and nutrition resources at their coffee shop, grocery store and greenhouse; New Moms in Illinois employs and trains young new mothers in manufacturing at their candle company; and Crossroads Campus in Tennessee helps disconnected youth enter the workforce with paid job training internships in retail, pet grooming, and shelter pet care. Employment social enterprises add value to our economy; for every dollar spent by the social enterprise, the return on investment was \$2.23 for society as a whole.⁴

This flexibility in offering paid E&T training alongside other components is why since 2023 CEO, working with REDF and Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI), has helped train 97 organizations serving an estimated 10,000 individuals nationally on how to access the E&T program.

Recommendations

The Farm Bill holds the solutions to some of the most urgent issues in our country. When we provide pathways to employment we improve public safety and add to our economy.⁵ Today we ask the Committee to include two bipartisan fixes to further strengthen E&T.

The first is the bipartisan *Training and Nutrition Stability Act* to ensure SNAP E&T operates as Congress intended. As people engage in paid E&T, their SNAP benefits quickly shrink and often disappear altogether. This leaves them vulnerable before a full time job begins and is in conflict with the design of SNAP E&T which intentionally pairs quality upskilling and food benefits.

The U.S. The Department of Agriculture directs states to administer work-based learning programs that move participants promptly into employment, have sustained interactions with industry, are aligned with a curriculum, and emphasize employer engagement in the execution of training. Abruptly ending access to SNAP and SNAP E&T for training participants disrupts the partnerships between SNAP E&T programs and local employers invested in the outcome of work-based learning for the development of their workforce.

Research shows that subsidized employment and transitional job interventions increase one's earning potential both in the short (\$1,123) and long term (\$600) and contribute to lower

³ Center for Employment Opportunities, "Impact Research," <https://www.ceoworks.org/impact-research>.

⁴ Rotz, Dana, Nan Maxwell, and Adam Dunn, Mathematica, "Economic Self-Sufficiency and Life Stability One Year after Starting a Social Enterprise Job," <https://redfworkshop.org/resource/mathematica-jobs-study/>.

⁵ U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "The Workforce Impact of Second Chance Hiring," <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/data-deep-dive-the-workforce-impact-of-second-chance-hiring-3/>

proportions of individuals receiving public benefits long-term.⁶ There are thousands of people in workforce programs who are at risk of losing SNAP and SNAP E&T due to their temporary income from SNAP E&T itself - an unintended consequence of the 2018 change that included paid work-based learning as an allowable component in the program. The bipartisan *Training and Nutrition Stability Act* would fix this “Catch 22” by not counting temporary earned income from federal workforce training programs in benefit eligibility.

Finally, the bipartisan *RESTORE Act* would ensure individuals with felony drug convictions are eligible for SNAP and SNAP E&T. North Carolina Conservatives for Criminal Justice Reform and the Drug Policy Alliance report that removing this ban can break cycles of incarceration. For example, individuals recently released after drug-related incarceration are 10 percent less likely to recidivate when granted full access to benefits like SNAP during their reentry transition.⁷ This is supported by CEO’s experience. One former participant Yasmeen relayed that even though she was committed to turning her life around, it was difficult to pursue employment at CEO without SNAP access.⁸ Altogether, ten percent of our North Carolina participants annually are unable to access SNAP and SNAP E&T due to this restriction.

These bipartisan solutions are vital to the program’s effectiveness. SNAP and SNAP E&T provide support to millions of Americans and when we reduce benefits it has consequences for individuals, communities, and the economy at large. We thank the Chair and members of the committee for including both of these fixes in the Farm Bill in the last Congress. We respectfully urge you to pass a comprehensive, bipartisan Farm Bill this Congress with these two fixes.

I thank members for their time and we will conclude with the following reflections from my colleague, William Lewis:

Good morning, everyone. My name is William Lewis. I'm a Senior Site Supervisor at the Center for Employment Opportunities, where I lead participants from our Detroit and Pontiac offices through transitional job training. However, my journey with CEO did not begin as staff. I started as a participant.

After serving over 20 years in prison, I came home determined and hopeful, but without any clear idea of how to obtain vital necessities like a home, a job, and the chance to start over. Thankfully, with the support of my family, access to SNAP benefits, and the strong SNAP Employment and Training program at CEO, I found what I was missing and the path to a great career.

My brother made sure I got off to a good start by buying me a laptop, clothes for work and job interviews, and a used car to commute to work. My aunt let me live with her rent-free while I completed job training at CEO. I also earned \$64 a day as a participant in CEO’s paid training

⁶ US DHHS, “Evidence Snapshot Subsidized Employment and Transitional Jobs,” <https://acf.gov/opre/report/evidence-snapshot-subsidized-employment-and-transitional-jobs>.

⁷ Yang, Crystal, American Economic Review, “Does Public Assistance Reduce Recidivism?” http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/olin_center/papers/pdf/Yang_920.pdf.

⁸ Center for Employment Opportunities, “When the Punishment Doesn’t Fit the Crime,” <https://www.ceoworks.org/blog/when-the-punishment-doesnt-fit-the-crime>.

program so I could buy my hygiene products and other daily necessities. And, because CEO's life skills instructor helped me apply for SNAP benefits, I could buy food and not be even more of a burden to my aunt, a retired school teacher living on a fixed income. What's more, my SNAP benefits gave me something that is of immeasurable value to me. Being able to shop for my food and pay for it just like everyone else gave me a sense of independence, self-respect, and dignity, which was as vital to my mental and emotional well-being as the food I purchased was for my body.

Unfortunately, because of how the E&T program is currently written, the \$64 a day I earned as a participant in CEO's training program required that my SNAP benefits be cut by more than half. Consequently, I was forced to struggle that much more every day to make ends meet and hope that my CEO training and hard work would pay off in the long run. Thankfully, it did.

Nevertheless, what happened to me is not unique. Almost everyone who participates in a paid SNAP E&T training program like CEO's and is receiving SNAP benefits will face the same challenge I did. Therefore, as Congress considers the reauthorization of the Farm Bill this year, I hope lawmakers will incorporate the Training & Nutrition Stability Act into this essential bill and let people who desperately need the help get these benefits and keep their food security as they work hard toward their employment goals.

The combination of SNAP benefits and the SNAP E&T program allows people to think beyond their next meal and focus instead on skill development and opening doors to long-term employment. At CEO, about half of our participants are working their first job ever with us. They gain essential skills like project management and equipment operation while receiving guidance and constructive feedback to help them build good work habits in a structured and supportive environment. Through our advanced training pathways, many participants earn commercial driver's licenses, IT support certifications, and other professional accreditations.

My story, and so many others like mine, are perfect examples of how SNAP benefits in conjunction with a SNAP E&T paid training is a truly effective and efficient use of tax dollars. Together, they provide people with food security and stability as they work to acquire the skills and training needed to obtain long-term, full-time employment and build a stronger, productive future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Because I was able to participate in the SNAP E&T paid training program offered by CEO, while also receiving SNAP benefits, it took less than nine months for me to transition from incarceration to provide for my own needs, assisting my children and grandchildren when they need me, and to be a productive member of my community. Now I will never need those essential government programs again.

If you remember one thing about our participants, know that, if asked they'll say SNAP and paid training are among the most important tools they have in their reentry journey. It's hard to name any two programs that, when combined, are a more efficient use of government funds.

We thank members of the Committee for this opportunity to testify.