



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the General Law Committee
February 23, 2021**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports efforts to remove barriers that discourage individuals from pursuing certain careers because of difficulties in obtaining occupational licenses.

A skilled workforce is vital to reinvigorating Connecticut's state and local economies. COST supports efforts to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to pursue careers in the skilled trades, which are well-paying, in-demand occupations.

Barriers to occupational licensure undermine efforts to provide individuals with meaningful job opportunities. In addition, given Connecticut's aging workforce, such barriers should be removed to ensure the availability of skilled workers needed to move forward with infrastructure projects that are critical to the state's economic recovery.

Accordingly, COST supports HB-6445 - AN ACT EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN OCCUPATIONS LICENSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTIONS, which is aimed at removing unnecessary roadblocks that may make it difficult for individuals to be eligible to sit for an exam or obtain licensure.

The bill also recognizes the importance of providing licensing reciprocity for qualified individuals from other states, including military spouses. While we recognize that other states may not have the same high level of standards that Connecticut does, creating an efficient licensing reciprocity process would be helpful in ensuring the availability of licensed skilled workers.

In addition, expanding opportunities for online training and testing, where appropriate, would be enormously helpful. Many exams are only administered once or twice a year, making it difficult for individuals to travel to locations on certain days to take the exam. In addition, education and training programs may not be offered in all areas of the state, frustrating efforts to attract a wide pool of candidates.

COST is pleased to support efforts to address these issues and looks forward to working with lawmakers to advance HB-6445.