

Patrick Leonard - HB5668

My name is Patrick Leonard and I am the COO and Co-founder of MIDAS Education, where we believe “learners are learners”.

I am here today to testify in support of HB 5668 and give some background to the work going on around the country in other states in the hope that Connecticut will decide to join them in building and sharing to help move towards a mastery-based learning system for k-12 students, higher ed students, workforce, job-seekers, and other citizens of the state.

In each state where we are currently working, we were chosen by that state’s RFP process. Our approach is to do the work because it is the right work, and we are happy to follow purchasing rules and processes set by the state.

As my colleague, Peter Glovin, explained, we began our conversations in Connecticut just a few months ago. Several states are in the same place, and a few are further along this path. It is our hope, and the hope of those already implementing such systems, that Connecticut will join and share the work to expand a system of evidence-based/competency-based learning to connect our students, our citizens, and our institutions of Higher Ed to the skills and jobs Industry needs.

We built our platform in partnership with the State of Utah to distinguish it from several existing “Digital Badge” systems. Our system is designed to incorporate rigor while allowing for flexibility in how it is implemented. It is not just an aggregator of existing “badges”, it incorporates a full creation studio, approval routing process, searchable catalog, registration, payment processing, evidence upload, scoring system (rubrics), and includes full transcription protocols to ensure Microcredential earners meet the standards set forth by the State and its named organizations.

The Utah State Board of Education is going into year three of their system. Currently, they are offering Microcredentials to teachers throughout the state so educators can show evidence of teaching mastery and improve their classroom instruction. This Spring, Utah is opening the system up to students to earn MC’s that will potentially give graduation credit, college credit, and industry certifications. We are working with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of Governor Spencer Cox’s Higher Education/Workforce Innovation Fund to expand the system to include institutions of Higher Education and Industry Partners to create and deploy Microcredentials to any and all citizens of the state to further learning and increase the skills of the state’s workforce.

The State of Wyoming is building Microcredentials, in partnership with Marzano Research, to deploy 48 Microcredentials in Computer Science Education and STEM. Our consultative approach has connected Wyoming and Utah and they are currently working together to share what they create and are partnering to help other states join as well. In mid-April, we have set a meeting with the Nevada State Superintendent of Education to discuss a three-state partnership. The work in Nevada began with very deep conversations with the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber realizes the challenges the State of Nevada is facing coming out of COVID. Nevada has some of the highest unemployment numbers in the nation and the workforce is there to fill open positions, but they are lacking the skills necessary for their industries to hire locally!

Washington State has two budget Provisos in the Legislature that have strong support to also develop Microcredentials for students severely impacted by COVID to help create credit recovery options, particularly for students in the hardest hit areas.

We are an organization of educators, by educators, for learners. Our motto is that “Learners are Learners”, and given an opportunity to show evidence of learning, everyone can move towards becoming life-long learners.

We hope you will join in this work.

Thank you