

RESPONSES TO:

- H.B. [6227](#), “AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IN INDUSTRIES WITH A HIRING NEED IN THE STATE.”
- H.B. [5668](#), “AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH A MICROCREDENTIAL PILOT PROGRAM.”

PROVIDED BY: SHANNON MARIMÓN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, READYCT

DATE: 10 MARCH 2021

Chairs Elliot and Slap, Vice Chairs Flexer and Turco, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee --

My name is Shannon Marimón, and I am the executive director of ReadyCT, a nonprofit affiliate of the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). ReadyCT works at the intersection of K-12 public education and workforce development with an eye toward aligning career pathway opportunities for students with regional workforce needs. In line with this effort, I serve as a project lead for the Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC) Education + Training Committee, and over the last year, I worked with a broad range of stakeholders to inform the [GWC 2020 strategic plan](#).

ReadyCT submits this testimony in support of H.B. 6227 and H.B. 5668 and urges this legislature to align these bills with concurrent efforts that have shared objectives.

- Regarding H.B. [6227](#), a thorough assessment of work-based learning (WBL) opportunities across the state will benefit students and businesses alike. We do note, though, that a similar effort is outlined in Section 2 of the GWC’s 2020 strategic plan. Under that section, a newly-formed Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS, proposed in this session and defined in [S.B. 881](#), Section 1) will be facilitating conversations in order to advance an overall workforce development strategy, inclusive of WBL, at a statewide level. This will include the creation of a digital platform for sharing best practices, enabling communication, and facilitating a community of practice among WBL system participants. The strategic plan also emphasizes the need to promote and market WBL activities to multiple stakeholders such as students, parents, school counselors, educators, and employers to engage more participants in these activities. At a local level, regional sector partnerships will be formed

that help convene local stakeholders to improve program-level coordination among educators, employers, and workforce boards.

Other sections of the GWC 2020 strategic plan supplement this work, including: Section 2.1 (develop a comprehensive, flexible career pathways system plan by December 2021); and 2.2 (propose a series of new sector training programs for high-priority jobs in manufacturing, healthcare, and IT by December 2021 with a process to scale the strategy statewide). The balance of Section 2 of GWC 2020 strategic plan provides for accelerating postsecondary access, academic and career advising, improving teacher and student preparedness, and adult education.

The overlap between H.B. 6227 and the GWC 2020 strategic plan is evident; there is great opportunity, here and now, to join them together in a way that will ensure maximum impact for students and employers alike.

- **Regarding H.B. 5668**, we recognize that microcredentials are of tremendous value to students and employers; it is forecast that 70% of Connecticut workers will need some type of postsecondary credential by 2025 -- just four short years from now (GWC 2020 strategic plan). This helps to explain why, in 2015, this legislature required that higher education policies support increasing the education of the population to not less than 40% of adults having earned a bachelor degree and not less than 30% of adults having earned an associate degree or sub-baccalaureate certificate for purposes of ensuring the state has a workforce with the skills necessary for achieving and sustaining a competitive economy.¹

With an ever-evolving job market, a microcredential program for Connecticut residents will provide them with a competitive edge over neighboring non-resident job applicants, though, again, we urge this legislature to avoid duplication of efforts. The GWC 2020 strategic plan at Section 1.2 establishes a credential registry system for secondary, postsecondary, and technical programs (credit and non-credit bearing) that improves educational access and equity, lifelong learning and career pathway advancement, and helps to sustain a globally competitive workforce for the 21st century. Under Section 1.2, the OWS will join a regional collaborative to sponsor adoption of a standardized credential registry, providing a single, statewide solution for uploading and searching for credentials across educational and workforce training programs.

Connecticut has a long history of supporting parallel initiatives that have common purpose but variable implementation. Although often well-intentioned, this can result in confusion among Connecticut residents most in need of these resources. There is a real need for consolidation and coordination in the state; to address this, the microcredential pilot and

¹ P.A. 15-75. AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

subsequent efforts could fall under OWS and thereby provide Connecticut residents with a true one-stop experience for both microcredentials and full credential programs. We imagine that this co-location would result in cost savings, as well.

Ultimately, while we support the effort outlined in **H.B. 6227**, we urge this legislature to determine where there may be duplication of efforts and streamline accordingly. Similarly, we support the effort outlined in **H.B. 5668**, and we urge this legislature to determine where there may be ways to meld the microcredential pilot proposal with the OWS credentialing registry undertaking.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony today. I would be happy to discuss this legislation further at any time.

About ReadyCT

ReadyCT advocates for education policies and practices that narrow achievement and opportunity gaps so all Connecticut students can access and succeed within a 21st-century education system and beyond. We do this by collaborating with educators, employers, and community members across the state. We are guided by the belief that schools must prepare all students to become thriving citizens and professionals, and we are committed to recruiting, preparing, and supporting educators to deliver on that promise. We consider how enacting one set of policies/actions makes realizing other policies/actions more possible and meaningful. Our priorities assume examples of positive growth and outcomes exist in some schools and districts, and that the state's role is to understand how certain schools and districts working with historically underserved students are closing gaps while others are not. We are attempting to study, learn from, optimize, and most importantly—scale—what's already been proven to have impact. Our recommendations focus on optimizing present resources rather than seeking new funding sources. ReadyCT undertakes strategic efforts that prepare every student to pursue whatever college, career, or credentialing opportunity they choose in order to reach their highest potential.