

Friday, March 26, 2021

RE: Testimony regarding Senate Bill 885 An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government.

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jennifer Gerber and I serve on the Equity and Access Committee of the Governor's Workforce Council.

I would like to testify concerning S.B. 885 An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government.

As a member of the Equity and Access committee, it has been a great privilege to support the work of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) to ensure that Connecticut develops the most accessible, equitable, and high-quality workforce in the country.

After a year-long intensive and collaborative effort, the GWC produced its strategic plan on workforce development in October 2020 which includes 19 different strategic initiatives, each of which is essential to the development of a high-performing workforce system. These initiatives were designed to align training and education and remove barriers to ensure that Connecticut's workforce is prepared to participate, persist and progress along in-demand career pathways. The strategic initiatives were developed in consultation with multiple stakeholders, including state agencies, community based organizations, employers, educators and philanthropy, drawing from best practices of models here in Connecticut and across the country.

As a member of the GWC, I have seen firsthand that OWS has been instrumental in coordinating hundreds of stakeholders across the state and organizing them into collective action in support of the goals and initiatives of the Council. In order to enable OWS to continue their critical work in support the implementation of initiatives in the plan, the Office must be allowed sufficient organizational flexibility and Section 11 of S.B. 885, outlines the creation and the codification of the Office of Workforce Strategy under the leadership of the Chief Workforce Officer of Connecticut.

Therefore, I am very supportive of the responsibilities of the Office of Workforce Strategy and Chief Workforce Officer. Their work to date has been invaluable and they are essential to be able to implement the GWC's goal to engage businesses, educators, and community organizations to build a more coordinated, responsive and inclusive nation-leading workforce system for the state of Connecticut.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Jennifer Gerber

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