

Jim Loree Written Testimony to Connecticut Senate Appropriations Committee

March 26, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

As CEO of Stanley Black & Decker, member of the Executive Committee of the Governor's Workforce Council and Chair of the Business Leadership Committee of the Governor's Workforce Council, I submit this testimony in support of Section 11 of Senate Bill 885 which will codify the creation of the Office of Workforce Strategy, a primary recommendation of the GWC. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

The primary goal of the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) is to ensure that Connecticut develops the most accessible, equitable, and high-quality workforce in the country. I applaud the Governor, and the State, for supporting demand-driven and business-led workforce development programs. These programs will be more accessible, more responsive, and more inclusive and will provide both students and in-workforce skilling, reskilling, and upskilling opportunities at a time when much of the workforce has been displaced by COVID and requires new skills.

In order to achieve these goals, the Governor's Workforce Council released its strategic plan on workforce development in October 2020 which includes 19 different strategic initiatives, each of which are critical to the development of a high-performing overall system. These initiatives require hundreds of stakeholders to be coordinated so that an array of different perspectives is informing the different recommendations and implementations. Since the inception of the Governor's Workforce Council, the Office of Workforce Strategy has been effective in coordinating different stakeholders across the state and organizing them into collective action to execute on the goals and objectives of the individual initiatives in the plan. Ensuring the Office of Workforce Strategy has the organizational flexibility it needs to ensure effective coordination and completion of the different initiatives of the GWC will be critical.

As a member of the Governor's Workforce Council, I have seen firsthand the power that the OWS has in not only executing on the strategic initiatives outlined in the strategic plan, but also on engaging with businesses, educators, and community organizations to build, in real-time, a more agile and coordinated workforce. By engaging businesses such as the organizations on the GWC, the OWS is coordinating stakeholders to build a workforce that is driven by the needs of industry. The OWS is also working closely with educational partners across the state to ensure that their curriculum is flexible enough to meet the rapidly changing needs of business. In addition, the OWS has been coordinating across different community organizations to ensure

the needs of all residents are reflected in the programs and structures that are being developed. It is the ability of the OWS to not only work across all of these different stakeholders, but to align them under a unified state strategy that makes them so valuable.

As part of the Governor's Workforce Council board meetings over the last year, I have also seen how many workforce programs already exist in the state, whether they are managed by a state agency, a business, a workforce development board, a community organization, a municipality, or some other entity. Ensuring that these key stakeholders are being coordinated so that program objectives align to the unified strategic plan or program funding is effectively braided across all institutions is critical for Connecticut to prioritize and manage, and the OWS is well positioned to do just that. Under the proposal the office will exist in the Department of Economic and Community Development for administrative purposes only, while reporting directly to the Governor. This structure will give the OWS the flexibility to work with and across the entire Connecticut workforce ecosystem: leadership in state government, companies, educational institutions, and other key stakeholders to ensure existing and new workforce programs are effectively aligned and coordinated.

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. I am very supportive of the responsibilities of the OWS and Chief Workforce Officer and believe they will continue the successes and impacts of the Office of Workforce Strategy. My team and I are looking forward to the Office of Workforce Strategy's continued strengthening of workforce opportunities in Connecticut.