

RESPONSE TO: **S.B. 885, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

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Chairwomen Osten and Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations 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 education and workforce development with an eye toward aligning career-connected learning opportunities for students with regional and statewide workforce needs. In furtherance of this goal, I am now serving as a project lead for the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) Education + Training Committee, and over the last year, ReadyCT has helped to inform the GWC 2020 strategic plan.

We submit this testimony in support of **S.B. 885**, and we do so in concert with our affiliate, CBIA, which has also submitted separate testimony in support of this bill. Our coordinated effort here is noteworthy inasmuch as these two key sectors -- public education and business/industry -- stand united in their support for this legislation because, together, these sectors can help Connecticut make great strides for the benefit of all its citizens and its economy.

Now, more than ever, Connecticut needs to establish and allot resources for the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS).

Connecticut invested in creating the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), which published its strategic plan in October 2020. Without leadership to drive the plan forward, its implementation will sit idle and languish. By establishing the OWS, the overarching goals of the plan are attainable, particularly since OWS will ensure that the strategy ties in, quite correctly, with K-12 public education. Our public schools are replete with untapped talent that, if properly developed, could position students for individual success while simultaneously helping Connecticut employers solve persistent and quite troubling talent shortages across a full range of high-growth/high-demand industries. Once established, the OWS will create, manage, and leverage partnerships between employers, educators, and other key stakeholders to meet these common goals, as outlined in the GWC strategic plan.

Importantly, the GWC strategic plan reflects a renewed focus on better preparing students at all levels (K-12, higher education, adult education) for the world of work. All of these constituencies are thirsting for access and opportunity. With access to relevant curriculum that provides them

with postsecondary options, students across the spectrum can begin to fill those undernourished talent pipelines, knowing that employers are eager to meet them there.

This legislature is urged to provide the resources necessary to create and codify the OWS under the leadership of the Chief Workforce Officer, who will, in turn, facilitate efforts aiming for the shared goals of public education and business/industry. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions or discuss any aspect further.

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.