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**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 Robert Trefry, and I am the Chair of Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS). I am here today to testify as an individual concerning S.B. 885 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government.

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. This vital work will help build the Connecticut economy and provide opportunities for Connecticut citizens, including our youth, to be trained and have access to good paying jobs right here in Connecticut.

To achieve this goal, the Governor's Workforce Council released its very comprehensive strategic plan on workforce development in October 2020, which includes 19 different strategic initiatives, each of which is 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 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 paramount.

As an active member in the Connecticut workforce development system, I have attended a Workforce Council meeting. I have seen firsthand the power that the OWS has in executing the strategic initiatives outlined in the strategic plan and engaging with businesses, educators, and community organizations to build, in real-time, a more agile and coordinated workforce. By engaging companies such as the organizations on the GWC, the OWS coordinates stakeholders to build a workforce driven by industry needs. The OWS is also working closely with educational partners, including CTECS 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

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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.

I have also seen how many workforce programs already exist in the state, whether managed by a state agency, a business, a workforce development board, a community organization, a municipality, an educational organization, 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. The OWS is well positioned to do just that. The proposal that they exist within the Department of Economic and Community Development for administrative purposes only will continue to give them the flexibility to work with and across 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. I believe they are a natural continuation of the current state given how successful and impactful the Office of Workforce Strategy has been at coordinating the state's workforce efforts. I am very excited to see the Governor's Workforce Council's initiatives come to fruition over the next few years and am highly confident in the Office of Workforce Strategy to execute challenging but exciting work ahead.

Best regards,

*Robert J Trefry*

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