



Written Testimony

Bill Villano – President/CEO, Workforce Alliance; Chair, Connecticut Workforce Development Council (CWDC)

Cathy Awwad, Executive Director, Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB)

Joe Carbone, President/CEO, The WorkPlace

Mark Hill, President/CEO, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)

Alex Johnson, President/CEO, Capital Workforce Partners (CWP)

To the Joint Committee on Appropriations in Support of
Senate Bill No. 885 – An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations for General Government
March 25, 2021

The Connecticut Workforce Development Council (CWDC) aligns the efforts of Connecticut’s five business-led regional workforce development boards that provide access to training and prepare workers for employment opportunities to meet the needs of businesses. The workforce boards are mandated through federal law to oversee, in partnership with local elected officials and the state Department of Labor, a network of 19 American Job Centers located across Connecticut. Collectively, the five regional workforce boards that comprise the CWDC serve approximately 90,000 Connecticut residents each year, and have brought into Connecticut \$95 million in discretionary funds and another \$65 million as partners on projects since 2010.

With this testimony, the CWDC is pleased to offer its support for Senate Bill No. 885, *An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations for General Government*. CWDC members believe that S.B. 885’s establishment of the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) – under the direction of a Chief Workforce Officer (CWO) who serves at the pleasure of the Governor – increases Connecticut’s state-level capacity to advance the state’s long-term, strategic workforce development goals. To that end, S.B. 885 describes the development of a state workforce strategy (in consultation with the Governor’s Workforce Council and Governor’s Workforce Cabinet) and the coordination and alignment of the state’s workforce development stakeholders to achieve the goals and outcomes of that strategy, in alignment with the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan* and the WIOA Local Plans developed by each regional workforce board.

The CWDC enjoys a productive partnership with OWS and the CWO, working collaboratively to support the achievement of many of the goals of the *Governor’s Workforce Council Workforce Strategic Plan 2020*, including those related to increasing access to demand-driven workforce training programs for Connecticut residents, ensuring data-driven decision-making, preparing Connecticut residents for in-demand 21st Century jobs, and providing Connecticut employers with access to the workforce talent they need to thrive. S.B. 885 solidifies this partnership to further the goals of the *Strategic Plan* and to help bring workforce development best practices to scale while at the same time recognizing each regional workforce board’s autonomy to develop and implement workforce programs that respond to the unique needs of the employers and workers in their regions. This is consistent with the letter and spirit of WIOA, and has enabled Connecticut’s regional workforce boards to produce several nationally-recognized models that have been brought to scale, among many other notable accomplishments.

The CWDC looks forward to working with OWS – regardless of how it is established or where it is housed – to continue to advance Connecticut’s workforce priorities, and therefore does not take a position on S.B. 885’s establishment of the OWS within the Department of Economic and Community Development, for administrative purposes only.



In summary, the Connecticut Workforce Development Council is pleased to offer its support for Senate Bill No. 885, which demonstrates Connecticut's commitment to investing in its national-award-winning public workforce system to achieve our common strategic workforce goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Villano".

Bill Villano
President/CEO, Workforce Alliance; Chair, CWDC

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cathy Awwad".

Cathy Awwad
Executive Director, NRWIB

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Carbone".

Joe Carbone
President/CEO, The WorkPlace

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Hill".

Mark Hill
President/CEO, EWIB

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex Johnson".

Alex Johnson
President/CEO, CWP