

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 Dr. Karen Wosczyzna-Birch and I am the Executive Director of both the Connecticut College of Technology (COT) and the Center for Next Generation Manufacturing (RCNGM), a National Science Foundation Center of Excellence. I am here today to testify 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. The OWS, under the leadership of the Chief Workforce Officer of Connecticut, Dr. Kelli Vallieres, has been regularly involved with higher education in Connecticut. I have been in my role since the COT was established by the Connecticut legislature in 1995 to create seamless pathways in engineering and technology from secondary schools to community colleges and then universities. The COT currently includes all 12 Connecticut public community colleges, ten public and private university partners, the technical high school system, and industry representation. The COT has a nationally recognized stackable credential model that provides micro-credentials, credit certificates and A.S. degrees that transfer to B.S. degree programs in Engineering Science and Technology Studies, including Advanced Manufacturing, at ten public and private universities in Connecticut. Through a statewide COT Site Coordinators Council, the community college faculty and administration have provided the leadership for technical and engineering education throughout Connecticut using industry-driven programs that are agile and responsive to industry needs. In addition, all of the curriculum and credentials awarded through the community colleges' Advanced Manufacturing Centers and related programs are under the COT and are regularly reviewed to ensure that we are responding to workforce needs.

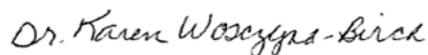
Over the years, Dr. Kelli Vallieres has been a collaborator on many initiatives to strengthen and expand Connecticut's manufacturing workforce pipeline where she has provided guidance from her expertise in both education and industry. Since the establishment of the OWS, we have collaborated on several initiatives including the implementation of the 180Skills online learning platform for dislocated workers and community college students; the development of a strategic plan for the community college manufacturing programs; increased engagement from

the community colleges with the GWC; and the promotion of funding opportunities. Dr. Vallieres regularly participates in the COT Site Coordinators Council to provide updates on workforce development in Connecticut and gather feedback from participants participating in current initiatives.

The demonstration of communication and collaboration among educational, industry, and community partners are key factors in the importance of the OWS and Dr. Vallieres' leadership. There are many workforce development initiatives within the State that have historically operated in silos. However, with the OWS, there has been more collaboration and strategic planning to ensure everyone is working together towards their common goal of a high-quality workforce in Connecticut.

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 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. My team and I are very excited to see the initiatives of the Governor's Workforce Council come to fruition over the next few years and we are extremely confident that the Office of Workforce Strategy will provide leadership to execute collaborative workforce initiatives that will ensure that Connecticut remains competitive and continues to grow its' economy.

Sincerely,



Dr. Karen Wosczyzna-Birch
State Director, Connecticut College of Technology
Executive Director, Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing