

# Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1197

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

**Vote Date:** 3/24/2023

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/15/2023

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Education Committee

Rep. Tim Ackert, 8th Dist.

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

Connecticut's workforce faces a shortage in many fields which may be alleviated in part by making early training accessible for in-state middle and high school students. This bill helps to facilitate this with provisions related to distributing information, allowing training, or developing model programs for various fields such as aerospace and aviation, the paraeducator profession, vocational agriculture, technical careers, and health care.

The bill also requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish a pre-apprenticeship grant program for boards of education and expand dual credit and dual enrollment programs. It additionally asks the executive director of the Technical Education and Career System to convene a working group, which would report its findings back to the Education Committee, to examine the feasibility of developing an aerospace advanced manufacturing high school.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:**

The substitute language for this bill removes provisions regarding health care dual enrollment in Section 2 and audits of workforce development programs in Section 5. It also adds courses related to health care occupations in the new Section 5 (formerly Section 7) regarding expanding dual credit programs.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

**State Department of Education (SDE), Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker:**

expresses support for provisions that would help local districts create and provide their students with the resources to pursue broad educational and vocational opportunities. They raise some concern for other parts of the bill, stating that Section 2 could be redundant since districts already have dual credit programs and noting that the department could not gather what activities this section applies to. They further note that Section 6 is not in the governor's biennial budget. The department proposes changes to Section 7, including a suggestion to delay the working group's reporting date by two years.

**State Department of Labor (CTDOL), Commissioner, Danté Bartolomeo:** supports this bill's focus on encouraging boards of education to facilitate work-based learning programs. They expand upon the department's structured apprenticeship training and express that they would be eager to collaborate with SDE in continuing the efforts outlined in this bill. They note hesitation with Section 5 because it creates what they state is a redundant auditing and accounting system\*. The department currently has its own fiscal and program monitoring.  
*\*The substitute language for this bill addresses these concerns.*

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, & Opportunity (CWCSEO), Children's Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio:** supports this bill's goal of increasing the labor participation rate in Connecticut to above pre-pandemic levels.

**Connecticut General Assembly, Senator Henri Martin:** supports this bill stating that it offers bipartisan solutions to the labor shortage and helps set up varied pathways to success for Connecticut's students beyond just postsecondary education. They note the importance of destigmatizing vocational agriculture and technical career pathways and applaud the bill's provisions supporting pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. They additionally make several technical and minor language suggestions, and they note potential concern for any programs tied to Brainard Airport if the airport is turned over for development.

**Goodwin University, Senior Vice President, Todd Andrews:** supports this bill noting that it recognizes the significance of the development of partnerships between workforce development programs and Connecticut employers.

**Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):** supports this bill's emphasis on the healthcare workforce. They note that the pandemic has strained the state's healthcare infrastructure and note their support for rebuilding that infrastructure through workforce development.

**Stonington Public Schools, Superintendent, Mary Anne Butler:** supports this bill stating that it supports school districts in providing successful pre-employment programs. They cite Stonington Public Schools' experience receiving grant funding to offer a construction trade apprenticeship program at the high school, explaining how, just this spring, an expected fourteen students in the program will receive 150 credit hours and are in the process of finding summer jobs with local tradespeople to gain further training. They emphasize the importance of investing in apprenticeship programs to prepare students to enter the workforce and support local economic health.

**University of Bridgeport, Vice President of Innovation, Strategy, and Advancement,**

**Elena Cahill:** supports this bill's provisions regarding encouraging and expanding opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school. They note that the university has partnered with local schools to offer college credits in a myriad of topics, which they state have helped garner student interest in further opportunities beyond high school.

**New England Air Museum, Vice President for Development, Richard Cleary:** supports this bill, specifically mentioning Section 1 and stating that it would provide critical training to feed Connecticut's need for aerospace workers. They note their own work in providing education to middle school students, most of whom reside in underserved communities.

**Connecticut School Counselor Association, Government Relations & Advocacy**

**Chairman, Virginia A. DeLong:** supports this bill stating that its goal aligns with school counselors' efforts in providing education and career options to students and families. They note that they would prefer to have mandated school notice to families of their student's options to ensure fully informed decisions. They mention that they would also support the building of a database where students can find dual credit enrollment programs.

**Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Board of Directors, Tyron**

**Harris:** supports this bill noting how it facilitates a seamless transition between secondary and higher education. They further support creating a pipeline to industries within the state who are struggling to recruit or retain employees.

**Manchester Public Schools, Director of Career and Technical Education, Beth Hayes:**

supports this bill stating that it would allow towns like Manchester to build a sustainable workforce, especially as Connecticut faces a workforce shortage. They share how Manchester's construction workforce development program provides students with the skills, knowledge, and passion to prepare them for opportunities in Connecticut's construction industry.

**Nordic Builders of Tolland, Owner, Elizabeth Koiva:**

supports this bill stating that it addresses Connecticut's aging trade workforce. They note that small businesses like Nordic have trouble remaining in Connecticut and growing a sustainable business due to difficulty finding skilled employees. They state that the bill's apprenticeship program would benefit small businesses in finding and retaining workers.

**Connecticut Society of Radiologic Technologists, Board of Directors, Diane Kosenko:**

supports this bill stating that it works to replenish an aging workforce. They request that the committee implement the programs carefully to not jeopardize accreditation standards. They also request that "radiation technologist" be replaced with "Medical Imaging Professional and Radiation Therapist."

**Home Builders & Remodelers Association (HBRA), CEO, Jim Perras:**

supports this bill, particularly the provisions that would create a funding mechanism to provide financial assistance to schools for students who successfully complete a pre-apprenticeship program. They state that this bill would help support programs that provide students with the foundational skills for a trade career and has the additional benefit of helping to address low housing production in Connecticut, thus potentially helping to improve housing accessibility and affordability in the state.

**The following individuals submitted testimony in support of this bill.** They particularly support Section 6 and specifically note the need for more skilled workers in the construction industry. They state that the workforce development efforts in this bill can help alleviate the labor crisis in the state.

**Home Builders & Remodelers Association (HBRA) of Fairfield County, President, John Hertz**  
**Home Builders & Remodelers Association (HBRA) of Central Connecticut, Vice President of Operations, Sheila Leach**  
**Preferred Builders, Inc., Peter Fusaro**  
**Southport Construction, Frank Festini**

**ReadyCT, Executive Director, Shannon Marimon:** supports this bill stating that it prepares Connecticut's students for postsecondary success in high-growth, high-demand industries. They suggest including information on existing efforts in workforce development to help streamline implementation. They also suggest additionally investing in the state's longitudinal data system to examine the impacts of K-12 career preparation programs.

**East Coast Builders Group, Owner, Jeffrey Navarro:** supports this bill stating that it can help alleviate daily concerns of small businesses stemming from labor shortages including project delays, increased labor costs, and safety concerns. The group applauds this bill's efforts towards training the future workforce and supporting economic growth.

**Town of Suffield, Director of Technology, Rebecca Osleger:** supports this bill stating that it begins the mitigation process of the residential construction labor shortage.

**Santini Living, Builder/Developer, Eric A. Santini:** supports this bill stating that it addresses the home building industry's lack of young workers. They state that Connecticut's housing needs must be approached through workforce development and should tap into the student population not suited for a 4-year college environment.

**Hartford Brainard Airport Association, Inc. (HBAA), President, Michael Teiger:** supports this bill and expresses hope that it would help to alleviate the workforce shortage in airplane mechanics and pilots.

**Connecticut Residential, Inc., President, Scott Volpe:** supports this bill's focus on skilled worker training in high school and alternative pathways for students not seeking to attend college.

**Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), President, Jennifer Widness:** supports this bill stating that it promotes the creation and protection of relationships between colleges, local school boards, and local industries. They note that these relationships foster workforce development and retention of students attending CCIC members.

**Walter Northrop:** supports training young people in skilled trades and helping lay the foundations for a broader and better workforce, especially when Connecticut faces a shortage in many fields. They note that college is not the only pathway after high school, and it is important to show students what options they have.

**The following individuals submitted testimony in support of this bill.**

Waterbury School District, School Counselor, Tagrid Mikael  
Frank Podgwaite

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Connecticut Republican Assembly, President, Anne Manusky:** opposes this bill stating that Connecticut already has vocational and technical programs.

**The following individuals submitted testimony in opposition to this bill.**

Mary Barrett  
Laurie Verrilli

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF GENERAL COMMENT:**

**Leslie Carson:** supports providing opportunities for Connecticut youth. However, they suggest that the state incentivize businesses with funding for hiring pre-apprentices. They also state that school boards would need to use their own funds to begin a trade program, if one already did not exist, in order to receive state funds.

**Reported by: Weston Stephens**

**Date: 3/29/2023**