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RE: SB 396 AN ACT CONCERNING CONNSTEP FUNDING

I am Bonnie DelConte, President of CONNSTEP, an organization whose mission is to help Connecticut manufacturers apply advanced manufacturing methodologies to remain competitive, supporting the economy here in Connecticut.

Since 1994, CONNSTEP focuses on producing significant economic impact and results, measured quarterly through an independent audit. Our full scale programs include lean, quality, enterprise growth and green initiatives.

We are the recipient of funding support from the federal government, through the National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and from the State of Connecticut through the DECD. MEP is one of the most successful federal/state partnerships in government. Being the MEP center for Connecticut, we are able to partner with all other MEP centers throughout the country to offer services without duplication of effort. An actual example of this will be held on Thursday of this week, when we will host an event at the convention center with United Technologies. CONNSTEP along with the Wisconsin MEP will start yet a second event this fiscal year in providing lean supplier practices. An additional 15 Connecticut suppliers will participate, receive training, and remain competitive. This collaborative effort is yet another benefit of the MEP advantage.

CONNSTEP also continues to collaborate with Connecticut memberships and not-for-profit organizations in order to offer educational opportunities. We are joined in alliance with MAC, NHMA, and SMA to coordinate monthly roundtable meetings focused on manufacturing operations. We also worked diligently over several months with the Aerospace Components Manufacturers on technology assessments, documenting the needs for advanced machining for programs for future workforce development. We are also proud to have introduced the CT SHINGO prize for manufacturing excellence. CT had 3 award recipients for 2007, showcasing their businesses of best practices.

We are recognized strongly with the Green Suppliers Network – a collaborative venture among industry and the US EPA, offering subsidized Lean/Green projects to help reduce environmental impacts. We are the forefront in training and have a nationally recognized environmental engineer on our staff, who provides training expertise and we are prepared to participate and offer our assistance in support of the Governors Green Collar initiatives.

CONNSTEP was pleased and extends its gratitude to the committee on becoming a line item into the budget, moving from bonding in 2006. However, during this transition funding was greatly reduced and has effected strategic planning and offerings to our clients based on federal match requirements. We have yet continued to remain true to

our mission, while operating with less capacity and resources. In fiscal years 2003 through 2007, CONNSTEP clients reported 3320 jobs retained and more than 1100 new jobs created. But this gets harder to accomplish with reduced staffing levels of more than 20% and trying to adhere to affordable programs for our manufactures that they would otherwise not be able to participate in.

Since this bill was raised, tremendous amounts of letters from our manufactures have been written on our behalf. We respectfully ask that you read them and ask for your support of SB 396.