

Testimony of Robert Torrani

Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.

before

Committee on Government Administration and Elections

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Regarding

Raised Bill No. 467 - An Act Concerning Lean Government

My name is Robert Torrani and I am the Director of the Manufacturing & Supply Chain Initiative (MSCI) at the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc. (CCAT). I am appearing in support of the intent of Raised Bill No. 467, but would like to offer some suggestions for making the process this bill describes more successful.

Before I suggest specific modifications to Bill 467, please allow me to take a moment to define my experience with lean to help put my comments in perspective. I have 17 years of experience implementing lean as an employee of global corporations. Working with an MIT-USAF-Industry Consortium, I co-authored the Transition-to-Lean Roadmap to guide organizations implementing lean. At CCAT, we successfully implemented the Connecticut Aerospace and Defense Initiative providing \$2M to help small and medium-sized manufacturers conduct lean projects; receiving national "best practice" recognition for the program management of this initiative. During the past four years I've also been an adjunct professor at Rensselaer's Lally School of Management and Technology responsible for graduate course work which includes extensive discussion of effective lean management methods.

First, I applaud this committee for taking action and recognizing the opportunity lean provides for simultaneously creating higher operating efficiency and improved service levels to the public. While Lean fundamentals are relatively simple to understand and results can be realized incrementally, Lean is not a quick fix or a part-time activity. The most successful implementations typically have strong top-down commitment, active participation by management, integration with the strategic plan of the organization, and a guarantee that employees will not lose their jobs as a result of a Lean improvement project. Over time, successful implementations also alter the culture of the organization, creating a truly empowered workforce that has a healthy distaste for the status quo; hence energized to continually make improvements.

An important first step is to establish a centralized focal point for lean. Bill 467 (line 15) names the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) as this focal point. Recent research on improving service delivery in government sponsored by IBM's Center for the Business of Government supports that a "...steering committee or assigning a high-level executive to this task (lean coordination & promulgation) should be considered, but it is important to avoid establishing a new bureaucracy." Training in lean fundamentals for OPM personnel and establishing a steering committee should be considered. I can provide additional suggestions for the structure and composition of such a steering committee.

Lean implementations typically fail because the focus is on the tools of lean and not the transformation of the workforce culture. This is the concern I have with the implementation plan defined in Bill 467 (lines 18-19). The bill calls for selecting the “highest priority” improvement projects. While such projects may offer the biggest savings potential, they will likely be the highest risk. Early failures can undermine the noble intent of this committee. The proven approach is to initially pick projects of finite scope that will provide guaranteed results that can be publicized to create momentum and buy-in from workers and management.

Earlier I mentioned creating higher operating efficiency and improved service levels to the public. I suggest this purpose, not “minimizing the number of employees” as currently stated in Bill 467 (line 31), should be adopted. Putting people’s jobs at risk will surely stall the lean implementation.

Bill 467 (line 32) directs agencies to “replace paper with technology whenever possible”. I suggest this direction can be very costly and only marginally improve operating efficiency. We should resist the temptation to do things faster or paperless with technology that lean principles tell us we should not be doing at all. A proven lean approach is to simplify the process before attempting to automate it. A good example of what I mean by this is the paperless application and reporting system CCAT designed for administering the ADVANCE incumbent worker training grant for the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford. We took great care to simplify the workflow, forms, and even data elements needed before we turned to our IT team.

Finally, I would like to offer that CCAT has the experience and capability to assist (train, coach, mentor, and facilitate) both the OPM and each agency on the proposed lean journey. I believe a proposal for already budgeted funding which CCAT submitted to DECD in October 2009 can be modified to support our role on this important venture.