GrowJobsCT
MANUFACTURING MAKES CT'S FUTURE

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Statement of John Harrity
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Supporting Raised Bill:

HB 5362 – AN ACT CONCERNING NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND

Committee on Higher Education and Employment
March 2010

Senator Handley, Representative Willis, members of the committee: my name is John Harrity. I serve as Director of GrowJobsCT, a coalition of business, labor and community groups, along with elected officials, that focuses on the need to sustain and expand manufacturing jobs in the state of Connecticut.

I regret that I was unable to testify at the March 4 public hearing, but I did want to convey to you our support for HB 5362 – AN ACT CONCERNING NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND.

First, I would like to express my thanks to House Majority Leader Merrill and Senate Majority Leader Looney for being champions of this bill, and other measures to help put Connecticut citizens back to work and prepare our state for the demands of future employment. There is no greater imperative in today's hyper-competitive global market, and especially while unemployment remains at excessive levels here in our state.

HB 5362 is the embodiment of a well-used but true proverb: if you give a person a fish, you feed them for one day. If you teach a person to fish, you allow them to feed themselves for a lifetime.

You heard undisputed testimony in the hearing about the success of this program in Michigan, where 35,000 people have taken advantage of the educational opportunities offered, and 48% of them are now gainfully employed, with 90% in the field for which they studied. This is a program that works.

There is no doubt that our state needs to step up to the tremendous challenges we face. State unemployment is 9%, with the total unemployment (including discouraged & part-time workers) nearly double that. Our state economy has been "hollowed out" with the decline of aerospace and other manufacturing. We will not produce growth without substantial initiatives to attract new, high tech products and services. In order to do that, we need to have a skilled workforce. HB 5362 is an investment in Connecticut workers that will allow us to survive and hopefully thrive in an increasingly difficult economic climate.

Thank you.

John Harrity