

February 17, 2011

**HOUSE BILL 6321**

Testimony submitted to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

My name is Rich Tariff and I am the director of EASTCONN Adult Services in northeast CT. Suzanne Cimochoowski, our coordinator for workforce preparation, is also with me.

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, good afternoon:

We are here to testify in support of House Bill 6321, an Act Concerning a College Transition Pilot Program. From working with the Nellie Mae Foundation and our College Transitions programs, we are aware that more than 60% of the state's community college students need one or more remedial courses and only about 50% of these students pass those. Compounding this problem is that the overwhelming majority of these students are high school graduates who cannot be served in our adult education funded programs which do provide basic skills remediation. These students also must use their PELL dollars or their own funds to take these courses which lengthens their course of study and do not count towards their diploma. At EASTCONN we have been working for years on solutions to this problem. EASTCONN Adult Education is the first in the state to be contracted through our local Workforce Investment Board to provide workshops onsite at the four CT Works East to help un and underemployed workers successfully transition into post-secondary level math and writing classes. In the last year alone, over 200 CT Works clients participated in these workshops.

These workshops were modeled after our successful STEM pilot program classes funded by WIA youth funds and CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) and developed in collaboration with Quinebaug Valley Community College. By the end of the year, we will have served 82 students in our own STEM programs with a minimal expenditure. As an adult education program we have certified teachers who are specialists in providing remediation courses to native and non-native speaking adult learners.

Should this bill become a reality, we hope to be able to extend this programming to the residents of forty towns through a collaboration of EASTCONN, Norwich, and New London Adult Education programs. Our success with this small pilot will allow us to expand and model a program instead of reinventing the wheel. Our partnership with Norwich and New London is supported by our EWIB past and present partnership experience servicing adults of our forty towns in programs such as Summer Youth, Out of School Youth, JFES Case Management , WIA youth and vocational education.

We applaud the Legislature for considering this bill and support and endorse the need to begin providing for those folks with diplomas so that our future workforce can have the skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students should not be strapped with unnecessary PELL grants for remediation, while working to successfully complete their college programs. EASTCONN has the experience developing, managing, and

operating adult education programming. We have a model program in place and are positioned to provide this program throughout eastern CT.

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