



Center for a Sustainable Future

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**Commerce Committee
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Testimony In Favor of HB 5340 AA Establishing an Energy-related Jobs Task Force

I am David N. Cooper, Director of the Center for A Sustainable Future at Gateway Community College. I am a college administrator with a 25-year career in adult education for workforce and organizational development; I hold a doctorate in adult education. For the past six years, my work has focused on workforce development for clean energy systems and sustainability, toward economic revitalization.

I support the creation of a task force to study strategies for developing the state's energy-related jobs marketplace and workforce. The work of such a group is critical if it focuses on core issues such as: 1) targeting clean energy employment and business development in middle level technical economic and occupational areas that reach needy groups, 2) insuring funding for those who need short term non-credit technical training and the development of occupational education programs that adhere to professional association standards, 3) marketing to the citizens of CT to insure deployment of clean and energy efficient technologies that create broad economic demand, and 4) overseeing the activities of government in the marketplace to insure a level playing field that preserves and protects the environment while encouraging growth. Task force members should be carefully chosen to include people who share a fundamental understanding of these issues.

To create the workforce we need for economic development that makes a difference, we need to address educational funding issues for the working poor, the unemployed, the underemployed, and those no longer counted since they have taken themselves out of the work force. New York State, for example, pays for workforce development by allocating one dollar for work force development for every three dollars spent on state sponsored clean energy projects. To have an immediate economic impact of getting people back to work, training usually takes place in a relatively short period of time--equivalent to one semester—in non-credit certificate programs that teach new job skills.

Those who need to get back to work to support themselves and their families may not have an immediate need to be enrolled in longer term academic programs that could have numerous required courses in several disciplines taking years to complete. However, they still can reserve the option to return to take these courses to qualify for higher education opportunities at a later time. New York State, also administered through a Board of Regents system, offers a very popular Associate of Occupational Studies degree in New York's community colleges that teaches occupational skills without general education requirements. Those who seek to continue upper division level studies must take the required courses. As an academic administrator in New York State, I found that occupational skill development programs, in fact,

often provided the confidence and motivation for students to seek additional higher learning.

The State of Connecticut can facilitate the expansion of the workforce that we need to grow our economy by recognizing new clean energy occupations and by streamlining the processes by which workers are certified to perform limited or fully licensed work. This would identify what many are now calling "middle level technical" occupations that represent 47% of all of the jobs in CT. Accomplishing this will require the concerted cooperation of the Board of Regents, the Department of Labor, the Department of Consumer Protection and its 14 professional examination boards, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Department of Community and Economic Development.

The new state energy bill includes a section that states that professional association occupational standards will be followed in the enactment of the law. To accomplish this we need to facilitate professional standards certification and licensing processes. Developing new occupational standards and streamlining processes will accelerate the creation of the new workforce we need in such clean energy occupations as, solar installer, energy auditor, building performance specialist, portable generator operator, high energy efficiency energy insulator, alternative energy transportation mechanic, urban organic farmer, deconstruction specialist, recycled materials manufacturer, and brownfields remediation technician, etc.

"Public policy encouraging an energy-related jobs marketplace and workforce" would provide our citizens with reliable information on job training and requirements, clean energy incentives and opportunities, to insure fair play in the workplace, to protect and remediate our environment, and to inspire confidence in the growth of sustainable clean energy systems. The Center for a Sustainable Future at GCC was envisioned and created with enthusiastic support for the development of enabling public policy to facilitate these goals.

Clean energy systems, energy efficiency, and brownfields remediation represent major growth opportunities for economic revitalization in Connecticut. However, the way in which this revitalization takes place will affect the "protection of human health and the environment," public safety, labor, human, and environmental standards, state employment levels, and local economic development for years to come. The transition to cleaner technologies, the use of high-energy efficiency construction materials, and brownfields remediation technologies should be guided by public policy that accelerates the development of our clean energy economy and provides oversight to insure a fair playing field.

In the tremendous urgency of now to stimulate our economy, Connecticut has passed remarkable pieces of legislation to encourage the implementation of cleaner technologies and high-energy efficiency standards. Jobs legislation signed into law last fall provides generous incentives to create new businesses and to hire the unemployed, veterans, persons with disabilities, and the working poor into higher level positions. However, the economy has not yet grown with the anticipated increases in activity.

As we build strong public dialogue on the creation of a clean energy economy, we should ask whether we have we built in the significant and accessible incentives for training and job creation that truly will promote economic revitalization? We in Connecticut are a progressive yet cautious people. We would like to be shown that the benefits are real and that the same standards and protections built into the fossil fuel systems characterizing the past 100 years also are integrated into our new clean energy system. The oversight provided by public policy will accelerate the deployment of a skilled work force and a clean energy-related jobs marketplace. We have the knowledge and the resources to create a sustainable clean energy economy that creates opportunities for all of our citizens. The task force created by this bill can

help to insure that we reach these goals.

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