

State Vocational Federation of Teachers



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Testimony of Jan Hochadel, President

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HB 5351 An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools

Education Committee

March 5, 2012

Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to again represent the 1,180 teachers and 11,000 students in the Connecticut Technical High School System. I believe that HB 5351 will build on the recommendations of the CTHSS Task Force to support and strengthen our system.

As was outlined in SB 24, the proposal for a new technical high school system board will make the CTHSS like every other school system in CT, which has a school board specifically dedicated to its own system's needs and concerns. For 100 years, the CTHSS has not had such a board, and has fallen under the control of the State Board of Education. While SBE has traditionally tried to provide guidance and direction, their responsibilities are too broad to give anything but general support. The CTHSS has not had a board concerned solely with its mission and its needs. Consequently, our specific issues have often not received the attention they deserve. With the proposed governance council, many problems that we face – like developing a new evaluation system that addresses the teaching of trades, addressing our crumbling buildings, or reacting to the demands of local industry – will now receive the attention that is long overdue.

We believe the makeup of the board recommended in HB 5351 is an improvement over that in SB 24. We continue to applaud the inclusion of members from the State Board of Education CTHSS Committee and members selected by the Commissioners of Labor and of Economic and Community Development. We continue to believe

that the “four executives of CT-based employers” should be directly connected to our schools’ Trade Technology Advisory Committee to better connect the needs of employers with the mission, the curriculum, and the technical capabilities of our schools. TTAC members are local industry leaders who donate their time, energy, talent, and often their money to help our teachers and students be current in the trades. We continue to believe that a parent on the Council could provide insight into why families choose technical education for their children, and how that decision impacts their lives. Additionally, the Council would benefit from a representative from the community colleges, who would facilitate the improvement of the articulated agreements which help our students refine their skills in higher education. Attached to my testimony is proposed language that includes these changes.

The Department of Labor is trying to forge a link between the CTHSS, technical colleges, and the manufacturing industries. We strongly support this initiative, and believe that these pathways for our students should receive representation on the Board.

Our long-term success as a state will depend on the skilled workforce CTHSS provide employers. House Bill 5351 recognizes the role we play in building that workforce. I applaud the effort, and believe that the input of this committee will improve the bill, and ultimately our system.

Thank you

Suggested alternative language for composition of an independent CTHSS school board:

New section: Connecticut Technical High School System Board of Education (Effective July 1, 2012)

- (a) There is established an independent board of education for the Connecticut Technical High School System. Such board shall consist of twelve members, (A) one of whom shall be a parent or guardian of a student currently attending a state technical high school, (B) one of whom shall be nominated by the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, (C) one of whom shall be nominated by the Chancellor of the Community-Technical College System and (D) one of whom shall be a nonvoting student member. The remaining eight members shall (A) have experience in manufacturing or a trade offered at the regional technical high schools, (B) have served as a member of a Trade and Technology Advisory Committee at a regional vocational technical high school, (C) be an alumnus of a regional vocational technical high school or (D) have served as an educator at a regional vocational technical school.
- (b) The Governor shall appoint, with the advice and consent of the General Assembly, the members of said board, provided each student member (1) is enrolled in a state technical high school, (2) has completed eleventh grade prior to the commencement of his or her term, (3) has at least a B plus average, and (4) provides at least three references from teachers in the school he or she is attending. The nonstudent members shall serve for terms of four years commencing on July first in the year of their appointment. The student members shall serve for terms of one year commencing on July first in the year of their appointment.
- (c) For purposes of transition, members of the State Board of Education's regional vocational-technical school subcommittee will serve as ex officio members on the CTHSS board of education from July 1, 2012 until June 30, 2013.
- (d) The Governor shall select one of the members of the CTHSS Board of Education to serve as chairperson. Said board shall appoint such committees as may be convenient or necessary in the transaction of its business. The CTHSS Superintendent shall serve as secretary to the board and said superintendent may appoint an assistant secretary, provided neither of them shall be members of the board. The superintendent shall record all acts of the board and certify the same to all concerned and shall be the custodian of its records and papers; shall prepare such routine business for presentation to said board as may be necessary or advisable; shall compile and publish, under the direction of said board, all regulations and acts which may be required and shall perform such duties as the board prescribes. Said board may appoint, and may prescribe the duties of, such subordinates, agents and employees as it finds necessary in the conduct of its business.