

# State Vocational Federation of Teachers



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Testimony of Jan Hochadel, SVFT President

State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A

## **SB # 24 An Act Concerning Educational Competitiveness**

Education Committee

February 21, 2012

As the elected President of the 1180 teachers who work with the almost 11,000 students in the Connecticut Technical High School System, I am honored to have the opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill #24. We appreciate the work of CTHSS Task Force, led by Mr. Mark Ojakian, which understood the challenges and unique needs of our system, and made recommendations to further support and strengthen us. We are also grateful the Governor took these recommendations into consideration when developing this bill. I would like to take a moment to speak to a few of these issues.

The proposal for a governance board to address the specific needs of the CTHSS is a positive step needed to maintain the long-term viability of the system. Every other school system in Connecticut has a Board specifically dedicated to their system's needs and concerns, and the State Board of Education provides general oversight. For 100 years, the CTHSS has not. Consequently, our specific issues have often not received the attention they deserve. With the proposed Governance Council, many problems that we face – developing an evaluation instrument that addresses the teaching of trades, addressing our crumbling buildings, reacting to the demands of local industry – will now receive the attention they deserve.

While we agree with the need for a Governance Council, we would like this committee to consider whether the proposed make-up of the membership best meets our needs. We applaud the inclusion of members of the Board of Education CTHSS Committee on the Board; these are dedicated people with knowledge and passion for the CTHSS mission. Similarly, it is appropriate that the Commissioners of Labor and Economic and Community Development select a member; their input

would provide a valuable perspective. However, we have concerns with the inclusion of “four executives of CT employers as selected by the local chambers of commerce.” We believe members of the schools’ Trade Technology Advisory Committee would be far more qualified to address the needs of employers and the mission of our schools. TTAC members work with our trade teachers on curriculum, current equipment, and other issues. They have the knowledge of our system and our trades that the chamber of commerce simply does not. We would also like to see a parent on the Council, who could provide insight into reasons why families choose technical education for their child, 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. We believe that the Governance Board would better be served by utilizing people who are already demonstrating their commitment to the success of our system. I have attached AFT-CT’s proposed Council make-up to my written testimony.

The Governance Board will provide a structure to support the CTHSS, but our success ultimately depends on the financial commitment the State is willing to make to educate a skilled workforce. The proposed \$500,000 in funds for tools and supplies is an excellent start, but it has to be viewed in the context of our needs. A trade department head at Bullard-Havens in Bridgeport told me that his supply budget when he started in 1986 was \$3000; this year, it was \$1500. When one factors in inflation, he is trying to educate more students on ¼th of the money he had. No amount of creativity, no willingness to “do more with less,” can make up for that deficit. The \$500,000 begins to address this problem, but it is only a first step.

Our long-term success as a state will depend on the skilled workforce we provide employers. Senate Bill 24 recognizes the role the CTHSS plays 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



## **AAC An Independent Board of Education for the Connecticut Technical High School System**

**Sec. 10-1. Appointment of board members.** (a)(1) Prior to July 1, 1998, the State Board of Education shall consist of nine members. On and after July 1, 1998, but prior to July 1, 2010, the State Board of Education shall consist of eleven members, two of whom shall be nonvoting student members.

(2) On and after July 1, 2010, but prior to April 1, 2011, the State Board of Education shall consist of thirteen members, at least two of whom shall have experience in manufacturing or a trade offered at the regional vocational-technical schools or be alumni of or have served as educators at a regional vocational-technical school and two of whom shall be nonvoting student members. Only those members with experience in manufacturing or a trade offered at the regional vocational-technical schools or are alumni of or have served as educators at a regional vocational-technical school shall be eligible to serve as the chairperson for the regional vocational-technical school subcommittee of the board.

(3) On and after April 1, 2011, the State Board of Education shall consist of thirteen members, (A) at least two of whom shall have experience in manufacturing or a trade offered at the regional vocational-technical schools or be alumni of or have served as educators at a regional vocational-technical school, (B) at least one of whom shall have experience in agriculture or be an alumni of or have served as an educator at a regional agricultural science and technology education center, and (C) two of whom shall be nonvoting student members. ~~Only those members described in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision shall be eligible to serve as the chairperson for the regional vocational-technical school subcommittee of the board.~~

(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 on the list submitted to the Governor pursuant to section 10-2a, (2) is enrolled in a public high school in the state, (3) has completed eleventh grade prior to the commencement of his term, (4) has at least a B plus average, and (5) provides at least three references from teachers in the school he is attending. The nonstudent members shall serve for terms of four years commencing on March 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. The Commissioner of Higher Education shall serve as an ex-officio member without a vote. Any vacancy in said State Board of Education shall be filled in the manner provided in section 4-19.

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.