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**Testimony of
Glenn Marshall, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
March 6, 2012**

Good Morning Senator Bye, Representative Willis, Senator Boucher, Representative LeGeyt and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony in support of three bills on your agenda today: ***S.B. #291: AA Establishing a Youth Employment System, S.B.#292: AA Aligning Connecticut's Intellectual Capital with the Business Community*** and ***S.B.#41: AAC Workforce Development***.

The Department of Labor, through its Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC), should be a vital partner in this Committee's development of Connecticut's Workforce Development policy. OWC serves as the Governor's principal workforce development policy office. The OWC acts as liaison between the Governor and various federal, state and local entities involved in workforce development issues and works to coordinate workforce development across state agencies. OWC provides staff leadership and support to the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) .

OWC's fundamental goal is to implement A Talent-Based Strategy that will keep Connecticut competitive regionally, nationally and globally in the 21st century and beyond. OWC works to ensure the state's education and training pipeline is well prepared to meet the rising skill demands of Connecticut business and industry.

The CETC is the chief policy Commission for workforce development to the Governor and is designated as Connecticut's State Workforce Board under federal and state law. CETC members include a partnership of private and public sector volunteers appointed by the Governor with a majority of members from the business sector.

Among other things, ***S.B. #291: AA Establishing a Youth Employment System*** requires the Labor Department to develop with its partners a comprehensive youth employment system in order to enhance and expand employment opportunities for youth, support career pathways to provide youth and young adults with education, skills and access to good jobs and successful careers.

DOL and OWC are already well on the way to meeting these goals. Specifically, OWC is involved in developing a broad-based youth employment strategy via the CETC Youth Committee. The Youth Committee will develop the strategy recommendations by July 1. With a 25% youth unemployment rate, it is critical to expand opportunities for youth employment. We know that deferring the first work experience for young people has negative consequences for the work readiness of our future workforce. We also know that young people do not pursue what they do not know. Exposing our youth to a variety of career pathways across key industries is essential to the development of our talent pipeline and economic vitality. On a parallel track to the Youth Committee strategy development, OWC has been active working across state agencies to open up additional opportunities for youth employment in key industries and at the same time, assessing how best to engage the business community as a full partner in this effort. OWC continues to work with CSSD, DCF and BRS to bring focused attention to bringing at-risk and vulnerable youth into the workforce

The Department of Labor has also recently created a new website "Today's Youth-Tomorrow's Workforce" designed to help young people explore career interests, career options and the world of work (www.ctdol.state.ct.us).

Finally, I would like to speak in support of **S.B.#292: AA Aligning Connecticut's Intellectual Capital with the Business Community**. The Department of Labor's Office of Workforce Competitiveness looks forward to being a partner with the Board of Regents for Higher Education as it seeks to develop an occupational job training program and assessment system as called for in S.B.# 292. The objective of OWC is to plan, initiate, coordinate, and collaborate in the development of a comprehensive, statewide workforce development strategy that responds to the needs of current and future workers, as well as the state's employers. Therefore, OWC already has access to information about industries with a high demand for skilled workers that will greatly assist the Board in its efforts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony and I look forward to working with you as a partner as you develop these important pieces of legislation. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.