

CONNECTICUT YOUTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION



Good morning Senator Bye and Representative Willis and members of the committee. My name is Erica Bromley and I am the Director of the Manchester Youth Service Bureau and the Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee for the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA). I am testifying in support of SB 291, An Act Establishing A Youth Employment System. This bill, which would further develop, enhance and expand employment opportunities to youth, support career pathways to provide youth and young adults with education, skills and access to good jobs and successful careers, is an important step in providing Connecticut youth the opportunity to be self-sufficient, productive members of their communities. In addition, creating a public-private partnership will allow for more youth to have employment opportunities during the summer and during the year, while also connecting businesses and industry with capable youth and a future workforce.

There are currently 100 Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) serving 147 communities across Connecticut. Mandated by Connecticut General Statute 10-19m, a Youth Service Bureau is an agency operated directly by one or more municipalities that is designed for planning, evaluation, coordination, and implementation of a network of resources and opportunities for children, youth, and families. In addition, YSBs are responsible for the provision of services and programs for all youth to develop positively and function as responsible members of their communities. Currently, many YSBs provide job training and employment opportunities for youth of various ages and stages of job readiness. Many other YSBs collaborate or contract with outside agencies to provide these types of programs.

Studies show that transition into adulthood is strengthened by the presence of employment and employment skills, and that low to moderate employment during high school (20 hours or less) supports post-secondary educational outcomes. Based on a past Department of Labor study, 18-30 year olds worked more weeks out of the year if they were employed as 16 and 17 year olds. Individuals who worked 20 hours or less while they were 16 and 17 were more likely than others to have acquired some college education by age 30. A similar study from the Urban Institute of "at-risk" high school sophomores suggests that working a moderate number of hours can be beneficial for future employment and higher future earnings 10 years after completing high school.

It is evident that youth need the opportunity to become employed, but also need the skills to acquire and keep those jobs. By providing these skills, we are creating more responsible, self-sufficient, and productive members of our communities. YSBs strive to help young people make smoother transitions into adulthood, and job training and employment opportunities are a great tool in achieving this goal. YSBs have the knowledge and structure to implement job training and employment programs in their communities and have done so for over forty years.

In conclusion, CYSA is in full support of this bill, and applauds the legislature for recognizing the importance of the role of employment in ensuring a smooth transition from youth to adulthood.

CYSA, the professional organization that serves as the collective voice of the Connecticut Youth Service Bureau system, is dedicated to promoting quality services for Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

