

State Vocational Federation of Teachers



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Raised Bill 875 An Act Concerning Donations of Equipment and Supplies to the Public Schools

Education Committee
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As an officer of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, I am continually impressed by skills and knowledge our students develop through hands-on experience in the trades. The ability to create something tangible, whether in manufacturing or carpentry or automotive, not only gives the student the practice necessary to develop their skills, but inspires them to keep learning and growing in their trade. During our many visits to our schools, we go into the trades and see highly engaged, motivated students who are anxious to show us what they are building or fixing. As someone who taught English for 23 years, I admire and envy those instructors who have their students so excited about learning.

Educating students in manufacturing or any trade is, of course, far more costly than educating students in Social Studies or English, of course. One machine in our manufacturing department might cost as much as a lifetime worth of textbooks for a student. As the budgets in school districts throughout the state become tighter and tighter, instructors must become increasingly creative in finding ways to provide students the materials and experiences they require to meet the needs of Connecticut manufacturers and businesses. Instructors often must request donations from businesses and manufacturers. While many companies may be willing to provide schools equipment, these companies understandably are unwilling to maintain legal liability for the equipment they donate while it is being used. Raised Bill 875 eliminates the barrier between companies that are willing to donate equipment to schools and the students who need it. It is a common sense approach to helping schools adapt to the financial situations most of our towns are in.

Two years ago, SVFT officers and members testified before this committee in support of HB 6318, which was a very similar bill that allowed companies to make donations to the CTHSS. The bill passed, and has provided much-needed equipment and supplies to our system. To my knowledge, the system has had no problems with equipment that has been donated. The language in the bill exempting individuals or companies who show "intentional or willful misconduct" providing property or fail to disclose "hidden defects" protects boards of education from becoming a dumping ground for machines that should be scrapped rather than donated. This proposed bill would eliminate the primary obstacle to companies making significant donations of equipment as a way of investing in our public schools and student, and specifically in the industrial arts programs. It would improve teaching and learning in technical education in our state. I urge you to support Raised Bill 875. Thank you