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Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc.

**Testimony for Patricia Downs &
The Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology for
Higher Education and Employment Advancement
Committee
On
RB 868 “An Act Targeting State Financial Aid to
Support Technical Training”
February 28, 2013**

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee, my name is Patricia Downs and I am the Senior Workforce Advisor for the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Raised Bill 868 *AN ACT TARGETING STATE FINANCIAL AID TO SUPPORT TECHNICAL TRAINING*.

The mission of the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, Inc., a non-profit organization, is to provide services and resources to our clients that help them implement innovative technology solutions, increase efficiencies and improve workforce development, and through collaboration with industry, academia and government, seek to create new partnerships for addressing 21st century economic challenges. A major focus of our work is with the manufacturing sector, understanding their workforce needs and recommending solutions.

The passage and implementation of this legislation will help address a gap in CT's student financial aid system. This bill is meant to help individuals, who otherwise could not afford it, enroll in short-term training programs, and acquire skills to prepare them for current job openings. CCAT supports giving the community-technical colleges the flexibility to use their financial aid funds for students enrolled in non-degree certificate programs, particularly for technical training required for those students pursuing a career in manufacturing.

It is generally accepted that postsecondary education translates into higher individual earning potential. It is important to note, however, that postsecondary education does not always mean four years or a Bachelor's degree. A growing number of high-skill, high-wage occupations prefer or require an Associate's degree or a nationally recognized industry certification or credential.

According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, in an American economy where the advancement of technology and globalization means that a high school diploma alone is no longer able to provide family-sustaining earnings to many, certificates represent one piece of a multi-pronged solution on the road to a workforce with 60 percent postsecondary attainment. Though certificates currently aren't counted in many



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measures of postsecondary attainment, often they provide the outcomes that degree-seeking students are looking for: gainful employment. Certificates can also serve as the first rung on the ladder to a college degree or as training for workers with degrees who are engaged in the process of lifelong learning and career advancement. The rapid growth of certificates over the past 30 years is a promising signal that students and institutions are recognizing the value of certificates at an increasing rate.

CCAT recognizes that the manufacturing sector has been, and will continue to be, a backbone of our economic prospects for the future. Ensuring that there is a skilled pipeline of qualified manufacturing workers is essential to the continued growth and success of this sector. This legislation will provide another critical tool for students and jobseekers who choose to gain those necessary skills to be successful in a manufacturing career.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.