



Testimony on HB 6433 An Act Concerning Technical and Other Changes to the Labor Department Statutes
February 26, 2103

Provided by John Beauregard, Executive Director, Eastern Workforce Investment Board
on behalf of the Connecticut Workforce Development Council

Good afternoon. My name is John Beauregard and I am the Executive Director of the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board. I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Workforce Development Council (CWDC), a collaborative of the state's five Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) that is focused on achieving statewide coordination of efforts pertaining to worker education and training.

The partnership of Connecticut's Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), the CT Department of Labor and dozens of service delivery and training organizations that comprise CT's public workforce systems has established a strong track record of performance and innovation. Our partnership serves all job seekers including youth, economically disadvantaged adults, and recently laid-off workers. Amidst challenging economic conditions we work each day to help identify career pathways where people can return to work and secure the quality of life they seek for themselves and their families.

One of the most important components in our partnership's programming mix is incumbent worker training (IWT). IWT is designed to upgrade existing middle-skill workers or to advance low-skill workers into middle-skill jobs. As part of the program, employers are expected to report an increase in skill level, demonstrate movement for employees through career pathways, and document savings or increased productivity. IWT helps our state retain and grow our existing employer base and thereby create new job opportunities. It serves as an ideal complement to the STEP UP programming outlined in the Jobs Bill and currently being delivered by DOL and the WIBs. It also benefits from the extensive federal awards brought to CT by the WIBs such as the \$20M in federal H1B programming currently being delivered across the state.

The most recent fiscal year serves as an ideal example of our partnership. The state allocated \$450,000 in the IWT line item to be administered by CTDOL and implemented regionally by the five WIBs. Through effective WIB connections with area businesses, employers invested both release time and matching funds in the program for a total of \$1,152,835—more than doubling the state's investment! In total, these resources provided training to over 2000 CT employees located at 98 different employers. State funds were fully obligated within the first six months.

We support program alignment and the efficient use of resources. Accordingly, we believe the most efficient use of increasingly scarce system resources occurs when WIBs and CTDOL run this program in partnership at the regional level. For example, in the Eastern Region, our Workforce Investment Board issues the announcement of the IWT opportunity with application, regional priorities, and closing date. Our Business Services Unit comprised of multiple Chambers of Commerce is joined by CT DOL to market the opportunity to regional businesses based on geographic distribution. The Team reviews the application for accuracy prior to submission. Points are awarded for things such as: new company, training low wage workers, giving wage increase at completion, STEM or high skill training, company with less than 100 employees, etc. A Review Team composed of the DOL Regional Director, two regional Economic Development agencies, and two BWIB Board

members then meet to review the scoring and make the final decisions on funding the proposals. We believe this type of collaborative model between the CTDOL and EWIB has served both employers and workers well and positions the workforce system to respond in real time to the demands of our local business community.

We also believe that the regions and their local partners should determine the criteria for investments based on the needs of their employers and workers. For instance, points might be given for new companies rather than the proposed policy which calls for 50% of the resources to go to companies who haven't receiving funds in the last three years. Again local areas are in the best position to determine whether a company should get IWT resources in a given year. For instance, a hospital might train different types of workers in each year or might make small investments over time rather than one large training agreement. The 50% rule would minimize the company's ability to participate in the program and potentially diminish opportunities for workers both incumbent and potential new hires.

The CT Workforce Development Council looks forward to the opportunity to continue to partner with the CTDOL to operate the incumbent worker training program and to shepherd the investments to promote economic growth for our state.

On behalf of the CT Workforce Development Council, contact William Villano, Director of the Workforce Alliance at 203-624-4030 or wvillano@workforcealliance.biz