



Connecticut Commerce Committee
February 27, 2014 Public Hearing

Testimony in favor of bills SB 23, HB 5041, HB 5275.

Good afternoon Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, Senator Frantz, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee. I am Dawn A. McDaniel, Executive Vice President of the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce. The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce seeks to foster growth and opportunity for veteran-owned businesses and veterans transitioning to the workforce.

The Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce represents the voice of over 42,000 veteran owned businesses in the state, accounting for 8% of the state's GDP. Studies have shown that veterans operate successful businesses and are more likely to hire veterans. Over the past four years, the UConn Entrepreneur Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities has invested \$1.2 Million into veteran-owned businesses, which has resulted in \$7 Million in gross revenues and workforce opportunities. We support state legislation that lowers barriers to entry to business ownership, economic reintegration, workforce development, and transition to the civilian sector.

In Connecticut, the unemployment rate among the veteran population is about 8%. These brave few support our nation's freedoms and offer unrelenting support in the state's time of need, yet return home to economic challenges and a restricted business market. Servicemembers, veterans, and their families need viable opportunities for a successful transition.

Primarily, this is an issue of retention. When military servicemembers leave the Armed Forces, they can obtain immediate residency in any state in the nation. We want to retain our current veteran population and ensure it continues to grow in the future. We want veterans to know that while others states may have better weather and lower costs of living, they also have lower quality of life, lower wages, and less economic opportunity. Strengthening Connecticut's laws to support entrepreneurship and job creation is the best chance we have for growing our state's population and economy.

We support these bills and appreciate the committee's efforts to provide these opportunities for business owners. We urge the committee to seek out opportunities to include veterans in your business and workforce development strategies throughout the session, and we look forward to serving as a resource to the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and we stand ready to answer any questions you may have.



Bills Supported by the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Business Development and Opportunity

SB-23 AN ACT CONCERNING BENEFIT CORPORATIONS AND ENCOURAGING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE.

We support creating a business category for social enterprise (b-corp) as it increases opportunity and options for veteran business ownership. Veterans volunteer for the Armed Forces in large part for their sense of service. It should be no surprise that social enterprise is a popular model among veteran business owners.

HB-5041 AN ACT CONCERNING INVESTMENT IN CONNECTICUT'S ADVANCED MANUFACTURING BUSINESSES.

We support the investment in business as it fosters job growth. We urge the committee to consider including a veteran workforce development piece to this bill, and including veteran owned businesses for priority funding. Creating opportunities for veterans in the workforce is an important step to reducing the unemployed and homeless veteran population in Connecticut.

HB-5275 AN ACT CONCERNING THE LEARN HERE, LIVE HERE PROGRAM AND BUSINESS CREATION.

This legislation provides the groundwork for expanding opportunities for veterans in the workplace. Many veterans attend school after leaving the service. This program offers a strong incentive to return to Connecticut and pursue higher education, while preparing themselves for entrepreneurship.