



**Connecticut Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
March 11, 2014 Public Hearing**

Testimony in favor of bills HB 5361 & HB 5469.

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Willis, Senator Boucher, Representative LeGeyt, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement 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.

When military servicemembers leave the Armed Forces, they can obtain immediate residency in any state in the nation. Increased jobs and opportunity is the best resource we can offer veterans as we seek to retain them within the state.

We appreciate the committee's efforts to provide opportunities for state residents. We urge the committee to seek out opportunities to include veterans in education and workforce development initiatives throughout the session, and we look forward to serving as a resource to the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony, and we are available to answer any questions.



Bills Supported by the Connecticut Veterans Chamber of Commerce

HB – 5361 AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENT REGARDING DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS.

We support this legislation, as it encourages servicemembers to return to Connecticut after their military service, and supports military spouses who relocate to Connecticut due to military duty. Veterans and military spouses who start education in other states or while on active duty and can more easily transfer credits to Connecticut has a positive impact on migration to Connecticut and retention within the state.

HB-5469 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

We support a study of workforce development, and urge the committee to recommend that at least one member on the study represents the veteran perspective. Having this perspective will offer richer discussion, and provide insight to identifying tangible, effective ways to integrate veterans into the broader workforce solution.

Creating opportunities for veterans in the workforce is an important step to reducing the unemployed and homeless veteran population in Connecticut.