

Dear Senator Cassano, Representative Willis and Committee,

I am so proud of my IBEST students and staff that have presented to you today regarding Raised Bill 5493 on contextualized learning. I am coming here today not as the Director of EASTCONN Adult Programs, but president of the Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education.

In CT there is such a strong need for our programs to continue their mission of providing Adult Basic Education, High School Completion Programs, ESL classes and Citizenship. There is not a year that goes by that our state department does not have all the financial resources to cover the costs of these programs. Our programs are in partnership with the local towns and our teachers are certified professional educators.

Our State Department of Education has funded, with limited resources, seven programs to Pilot the IBEST program. In addition our Department of Labor, in partnership with our Workforce Boards, has IBEST pilot programs within the state.

Those programs have limitations of the Jobs First Employment Services Program participants (they must be receiving state cash assistance for families). Additionally, the State Department of Education federal dollars for the IBEST pilot can only be used for the academic component since they cannot fund vocational training.

Quite simply, we are asking for additional resources to provide contextualized training (IBEST classes) for those students that fall through the cracks of JFES programs and federal regulations.

We applaud your committee for recognizing the need to strengthen Connecticut's workforce for those unemployed and underemployed. I am here to answer any questions.

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