



CONNECTICUT STATE
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Testimony by Gail Coppage, Director of
Innovation & Outreach
Board of Regents for Higher Education
Before the Committee on Program Review and
Investigations
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My name is Gail Coppage, and I am Director of Innovation & Outreach for the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), the governing body of the state's 12 community colleges, four state universities, and Charter Oak State College, the state's only fully-online public college. I am pleased to provide comment on **HB 5376: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee on the Reemployment of Older Workers as They Relate to the Board of Regents for Higher Education.**

The BOR, with the leadership of Dr. Gray, is creating a transformational plan so that ConnSCU will continue to be accessible and affordable to our students, and a major contributor in the development of our state's economic growth, business expansion, and workforce development efforts.

As outlined in HB 5376, there are five key components of the bill affecting reemployment of older workers I would like to comment on today.

Conduct feasibility study to determine whether to expand the manufacturing technology center model to create centers of excellence for other high-demand career areas: The manufacturing center model provides a real time review of the work of the four advanced manufacturing centers with continued engagement and collaboration by the industry leaders statewide. The CT Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT) recently completed a statewide survey of employment needs in CT which will help support and grow this initiative. We agree that the focus of centers of excellence should be on an effective series of time-sensitive courses that are stackable, portable and contain industry-recognized credentials. The centers should feature accelerated learning and certification leading to employment. Each student should be assessed for prior learning experiences for credit. The Advanced Manufacturing Centers in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Labor Apprenticeship office recently collaborated to review the existing advanced manufacturing program. CTDOL has just approved the education and training component of the existing manufacturing program for students to receive apprenticeship hours. This is very exciting news for both industry and our students!

As a part of its academic and facilities master planning process, the BOR is looking at ways to expand the Asnuntuck Manufacturing Model to other career areas, and we believe that we are well positioned to do so without the need for a feasibility study. Further, the academic and facilities master planning effort will require additional time beyond the proposed deadline to complete, due to the immensity of the task of examining programmatic opportunities across all 17 campuses.

Implement the Plus 50 Initiative Model throughout the regional community technical system: While the Plus 50 Initiative Model engages the plus 50 student population, with a focus on workforce training and preparing for new careers, any case management and job placement services that the Plus 50 model may involve will require additional funding. The BOR lacks the capacity to provide for program expansion utilizing current resources.

Establish consistent parameters for non-credit vocational courses and programs to be recognized by each of the constituent units of the state system of higher education: The Community Colleges currently do not have one set of standards in place for non-credit vocational courses and programs. The BOR believes there is a good opportunity to strengthen existing course and program offerings to better support industry needs in key industry sectors across Connecticut. Regional needs and offerings also must be determined when preparing and providing education and training in specific industry sectors. We understand the need for a credentialed workforce that is provided with consistent, uniform, industry-recognized credentials and do plan to discuss this need in a number of ways: a) Through the work and enhancement of the Advanced Manufacturing Programs, b) through the initiation of an academic master plan for the system, and c) through the work and plan in process supporting an Early College Program throughout the system of Community Colleges. SA 13-17 recently required the DHE and the BOR to develop a list of non-degree certificate programs and technical training courses offered by the regional community-technical colleges that directly correlate with workforce shortage areas in this state, including, but not limited to, health care, manufacturing, transportation and energy. The BOR compiled a list that includes all twelve community colleges' current active non-credit program and majors with the requested information as to whether they are WIA eligible, the cost, and the length of the program.

Collect data on students and noncredit vocational programs to better serve such students: BOR operates the Preschool to Twenty Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN), a system through which higher education credit and non-credit data can be linked to employment and wage information from the Department of Labor. The P20 WIN technical system and data governance committees will need ongoing financial and administrative support for the resource, as it was started with grant funds.

Explore financial aid options for students and noncredit vocation courses and programs: As BOR indicated in our committee recommendations, the BOR lacks expertise in the kind of financial aid products proposed. We believe that the Office of Higher Education, which manages other state financial aid programs, in partnership with an organization such as the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority, that offers loan products to Connecticut students, are better positioned to handle the requested study.

Thank you.