



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
FEBRUARY 10, 2015**

My name is Jennifer Herz and I am Assistant Counsel for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA has been representing Connecticut's employers for 200 years and today is proud to say the vast majority of our members are small companies employing less than 50 people.

CBIA submits this testimony in support of HB 6715 An Act Requiring Connecticut to Participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Regarding Distance Learning Programs.

CBIA supports this bill because it is essential that Connecticut offers accessible, high quality education opportunities for its residents. As you know, Connecticut employers – and in particular manufacturers – are facing a skills gap. In addition, employees need advanced degrees in order to climb the career ladder.

Distance learning programs offer flexible opportunities especially for incumbent workers to advance their careers. In particular, distance learning programs benefit the key demographic of 25-64 year olds. By 2020 it is projected by the Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce that 70% of all jobs in Connecticut will require post-secondary education (a minimum of a certificate). Since the state's population of 18 year-old students is declining, the 25-64 year old demographic represents the best way to meet this need. This cohort requires flexible, convenient programs since they are typically already working and/or have family obligations. This bill will help ensure that such programs offer quality education opportunities.

Finally, HB 6715 coincides with the goals of the Connecticut Planning Commission for Higher Education because it will target educational opportunities for the largest skill gap identified by the Commission.

Therefore, CBIA urges your support of HB 6715.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit CBIA's comments.