

March 1, 2016

Testimony in Support of HB 5423

Dear Senator Hartley, Representative Perone and members of the Commerce Committee,

My name is Kathy Saint and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Smaller Manufacturers (CASM). CASM is comprised of the Smaller Manufacturers Association of Waterbury (SMA), the New Haven Manufacturers Association (NHMA), Manufacturers Education and Training Alliance (METAL) of Bridgeport and the New England Spring & Metal stamping Association and collectively represents over 400 companies with more than ten percent of the employees in the state's manufacturing sector.

We support the goals of House Bill 5423, but the Association would caution the Committee to ensure schools are given the resources to develop students interest in the manufacturing industry. The technical high schools and the agri-science and technology centers as our ONLY STEM models have it down pat, the comprehensive high schools have an emphasis on science and math, not engineering and technology because they have all been taught out of context by faculty who have not applied their trades.

We would encourage teacher development by requiring attendance at the SCSU's summer teacher manufacturing institute and learn about manufacturing. We used to see industry professionals becoming University Engineering Professors, but recently engineering professors seem to be pure research focused having never applied their trade in a practical real world.

Many guidance counselors and schools measure their success on the percentage of high school graduates that go onto 4-year colleges. These metrics need to be altered to include manufacturing programs. Guidance counselors need incentives to include manufacturing as a career option that should be considered by students. By state statute the agri-science and technology schools must perform a five year follow up study of their graduates and recent results show there are 85% students who go to college graduate within 4 years. In comparison of all high schools, 33% of students graduate in 5 years. Where you go to college is the wrong metric, we should be looking where a student is five years after graduating high school.

There are curriculum standards that could be utilized by schools. Georgia has already established standards to be used by public schools to educate them about manufacturing. This website can provide examples of what Connecticut should apply. <http://theamericanmademovie.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/American-Made-Movie-Sample-Curriculum.pdf>

Parent involvement key to incentivizing youth to exploring fields in manufacturing. The Dept. of Labor should produce some video shorts that guidance counselors can provide parents to view that dispel misconceptions about manufacturing. It is important to dispel the myth that you must go to college to be successful.

CASM looks forward to working with this committee to provide some feedback about how we can better incentivize our youth.