

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Ed Leavy
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Raised Bill 5648, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Issues
Relating to the Recruitment of Manufacturing Teachers
Education Committee
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My name is Ed Leavy, and I am providing testimony on behalf of Raised Bill 5648, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Issues Relating to the Recruitment of Manufacturing Teachers. As the president of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, and as a member of the Technical High School System for over 30 years, I am well aware of the challenges that face our district and others in recruiting manufacturing teachers. As with many of our trades, an experienced and talented machinist is often making a financial sacrifice to become a teacher. It is not a career step that many people in the profession are even considering, though in the CTHSS our graduates often return as teachers to give back to their profession. I believe the makeup of the task force – which includes educators, business owners, and industry representatives – provides a necessary range of expertise and experience to help the technical colleges, high schools, and interested LEAs address the teaching shortage in this area.

I would make two recommendations to the task force. First, while recruitment of teachers is a necessary first step, it is only a start. The expertise necessary to excel as a precision machinist does not necessarily carry over to teaching 18 young people to develop those skills. My experience is that many people enter our schools eager to work with students, but quickly become frustrated when the students don't show the same immediate enthusiasm. Years of working alone at their machine has understandably not provided them the skills and experience necessary to be successful as teachers. Any teacher recruitment plan requires a teacher retention program to accompany it. People who have been able to make the transition from machinist to educator need to work with new teachers. Without a mentoring program, the recruitment of manufacturing teachers becomes a revolving door process.

Second, for the CTHSS at least, teacher recruitment for machining or any subject is irrelevant if we are not allowed to hire for the vacant positions. At Vinal THS in Middletown, we have had a vacancy in Manufacturing Technology for over two months. The CTHSS still has not been allowed to post that position, much less interview and fill it. Students with an interest in building a career in the manufacturing industry have a substitute teacher who cannot help them develop the necessary skills. The State should create a task force to encourage people in the machine technology industry to become educators, but when one of its largest employer of those educators – the CTHSS – is not allowed to hire people to fill those vacancies, it is difficult to see how the task force's stated mission can be successful.

Thank you.