



**Testimony of
Scott D. Jackson, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Program Review and Investigations
February 29, 2016**

Good Day Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with testimony regarding **Senate Bill 215, An Act Concerning Apprenticeship Expansion Based on a Program Review and Investigations Committee Study** and **Senate Bill 169, An Act Concerning the Labor Department's Apprenticeship Website Based on a Program and Review Investigations Committee Study**. My name is Scott Jackson, and I am the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL).

To begin, I would like to address **Senate Bill 215, An Act Concerning Apprenticeship Expansion Based on a Program Review and Investigations Committee Study**. This bill calls for the Labor Department to implement various federal models of apprenticeship in order to provide more opportunities for individuals to satisfy apprenticeship requirements. As you know, at this time, there are exciting new opportunities for both apprentices and employers who participate in the apprenticeship program.

There is a new Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF) Apprenticeship Program, which is a two-year, \$7,800,000 program that incentivizes employers to participate in Apprenticeship and become Sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship Programs in the manufacturing industry. Funds awarded under the MIF Apprenticeship Program can be used for wage subsidy, related instruction tuition and credentialing reimbursement. The maximum funding amount for the three components, is \$9,500 per apprentice for year one and \$9,250 for year two. The program is administered by the DOL and funded through the Department of Economic and Community Development's Connecticut Manufacturing Innovation Fund.

DOL has been awarded a \$5 million federal grant, the American Apprenticeship Initiative, to expand Apprenticeship programs in high-growth industries, with a focus on training for the manufacturing, healthcare and business services sectors. Administered by DOL's Apprenticeship Unit this will provide up to \$3,500 in tuition and/or training costs for 1,000 registered apprentices and 500 pre-apprentices statewide in these high demand industries.

With all of the current initiatives in the Apprenticeship Unit and the significant new duties the bill proposes, there will likely be a fiscal impact to the agency if this proposed bill were to pass. There are

many initiatives proposed in the bill including directing DOL to offer apprenticeship in all licensed occupations that meet the minimum on-the-job training and coursework requirements for apprenticeships. The Department would be required to explore the feasibility of creating an employment trainee office capable of registering trainees for participation in licensed occupations that require training but do not offer apprenticeship, identify the ten licensed and the ten unlicensed occupations that employ the most apprentices in the state and convene working groups for each occupation identified.

Apprenticeship benefits both employers and apprentices. These are exciting times for apprenticeship initiatives. The Department recognizes the critical role of apprenticeships and has just this month brought on board a dynamic new leader of the Apprenticeship Unit who will provide the steady leadership needed due to several retirements and resignations from the Unit. However, in this time of difficult budget issues, the Department may be unable to manage the additional workload outlined in this proposed bill without additional resources.

The second bill I would like to address is **Senate Bill 169, An Act Concerning the Labor Department's Apprenticeship Website Based on a Program and Review Investigations Committee Study** which calls for DOL to update its apprenticeship website. The Department certainly understands the importance of an easy-to-navigate website for the Apprenticeship Unit and has already begun improving its apprenticeship website.

The Department is unsure if it will be able to complete all of the required changes within available appropriations, but will do its best to accomplish the mandates. However, it is anticipated that, with all of the current initiatives in the Apprenticeship Unit, the Department will be unable to meet the timelines specified in the proposed bill.