

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Testimony of Roxanne Amiot
CTHSS Automotive Department Head
Public Hearing on Secondary Education
Appropriations Committee
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My name is Roxanne Amiot and I am the Automotive Department Head at Bullard-Havens. The CTHSS has been part of my life for nearly forty years. I graduated from Bullard-Havens as the first female automotive graduate in school history. In 1988, I became the first female automotive instructor in the system, and then four years ago became the first – and so far only – female automotive instructor. Some things have not changed over the decades. The system still provides young women the opportunity to step outside gender stereotypes and build middle-class careers as electricians, plumbers, or automobile mechanics. I may have been the first woman to be involved in automotive, but I am certainly not the last. Every year I work with young women with the skill and desire to be first-rate mechanics. Only our system provides a pathway to the lives they want.

Many things have changed. In 2011, I was serving as the automotive intern at Central Office. We spent a great deal of time responding to requests from the CTHSS Task Force. The Task Force was commissioned by the legislature and chaired by Mark Ojakean from the Governor's office. I attended Task Force meetings, and was impressed by the careful consideration they put in in studying our practices and policies. The Task Force's report is a strong endorsement for our system. Their recommendations included the establishment of the CTHSS Board, becoming a separate line item in the budget, and the drafting of a strategic plan. The implementation of these recommendations have been important, positive steps in the building of our system.

Now, just five years later, the Governor is recommending putting the CTHSS back under the SDE budget. This move constitutes a giant step backwards, and a refutation of the thoughtful work done by the members of the task force. It strips the CTHSS board of its autonomy by making it dependent on the SDE for its funding. This change would be questionable even if the CTHSS had struggled over the past few years, but the opposite is true. Applications are up, enrollment is up, test scores are up, and graduation rates are up. This change will threaten the steps we are taking to remain the best CTE system in the country. The Governor's proposals undo the recommendations that his own Task Force made. This system has been one of the most important influences in my life. It has played an important role for hundreds of students I have taught. I ask you to reject the Governor's latest proposals for the CTHSS, and let us continue on the path laid out by the 2011 Task Force.

Thank you