



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
FEBRUARY 29, 2016**

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 appreciates the work of the Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee on the Apprenticeship Programs and Workforce needs report. CBIA appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback for the report and again today on some of the bills that are a result its report.

Connecticut's manufacturers play a vital role in our economy: there are nearly 4,500 manufacturing firms that employ 10% of all nonfarm jobs in the state.<sup>1</sup> And, to the point of this study, manufacturers are expecting to grow their workforce in the coming years. The 2014 Survey of Connecticut Manufacturing Workforce Needs estimated 9,300 manufacturing job openings at the end of last year.<sup>2</sup> The need for skilled workers is significant. An effective apprenticeship program is a great tool to support the workforce needs of manufacturers.

CBIA's comments will focus on:

- **SB 169** An Act Concerning the Labor Department's Apprenticeship Web Site Based on a Program Review and Investigations Committee Study
- **SB 215** An Act Concerning Apprenticeship Expansion Based on Program Review and Investigations Study

Our comments focus on apprenticeship from the perspective of the manufacturing community. Manufacturing apprenticeships offer a great opportunity for both the employer and the employee to try each other out and determine if there is a good fit. Further, apprenticeships often expose individuals to an exciting career track.

Considering manufacturing apprenticeships do not always have the same incentives as other industries it is key that the registration process is straightforward and does not take a lot of time in order to

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<sup>1</sup> 2014 Survey of Connecticut Manufacturing Workforce Needs:

<http://www.cbia.com/resources/economy/reports-surveys/2014-survey-of-connecticut-manufacturing-workforce-needs/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www5.cbia.com/newsroom/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/MFG-Workforce\\_14.pdf?cldee=YnVkZGpAY2JpYS5jb20%3d&utm\\_source=ClickDimensions&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=CD\\_NEWSROOM](http://www5.cbia.com/newsroom/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/MFG-Workforce_14.pdf?cldee=YnVkZGpAY2JpYS5jb20%3d&utm_source=ClickDimensions&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=CD_NEWSROOM) (See page 4)



encourage more manufacturers to utilize the system. As is stated in the PRI report the Manufacturing Innovation Fund (MIF), through the Department of Economic and Community Development, is currently providing a financial incentive for manufacturers to enroll apprentices through the Department of Labor. A user friendly website will capitalize on the incentives offered by the MIF. SB 169 is a step in the right direction to create a user-friendly website for both employers and employees. A website that allows for easy access to information and frequency asked questions, as well as, allowing online enrollment and updates is essential. It is important to remember that many of Connecticut's manufacturers are smaller employers that do not have the staff to dedicate to enrolling apprentices and therefore a straightforward process is essential.

Creating a quick and effective registration process will allow more manufacturers to enroll apprenticeship which in turn will provide the state with more information about its workforce. Furthermore, an online system will create more efficiency for DOL and the employer.

In SB 215 it appears that the definition of "approved trade training" may delete the utilization of established industry requirements in its definition and instead use "recognized requirements by the Department of Labor". If this is the case, restoring a reference to recognize industry requirements may be prudent to ensure the training is aligned with the needs of the employer community. Further, the workgroups established by this bill will provide an opportunity for the manufacturing community to discuss the time, competency and hybrid approach to apprenticeship training. This diverse approach will allow apprenticeships to offer greater flexibility. In addition, these approaches may provide the employer with more flexibility to fulfill its workforce needs.

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