



State of Connecticut

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**Testimony in Support of Proposed HB 6583
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 23, 2017**

Chairs Bye, Linares, Haddad, Ranking Member Staneski, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of Proposed HB 6583: **AN ACT TRANSFERRING CONNECTICUT'S AVIATION MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN SCHOOLS TO THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM.**

Earlier this year State Representative Dave Yaccarino invited Representative Ben McGorty, Representative Joe Gresko and I to attend a meeting at the Stratford School of Aviation and Maintenance to understand the problematic lack of enrollment the school has this year. The aviation and maintenance schools located at Sikorsky and Brainard Airports became victims of the Education budget reductions implemented last fall.

These schools provide an 18-month educational training program, and upon graduation and passing the FAA examinations, offer the highly-skilled graduates excellent job opportunities at \$70,000+ a year. These jobs are in high demand and a critical operating component of Connecticut's aviation industry.

Due to the budget crises, tuition for program has risen to \$26,000. Currently, the students cannot qualify for financial aid as the aviation and maintenance schools are not part of our post-secondary education programs. Since upon entering the program the students have already graduated high school, Representative McGorty proposed the idea to transfer this two-year program to the Regional Community-Technical College System. This move would allow these students who are pursuing a certificate program to go on and earn their associate's degree as well.

This proposed bill was developed in a bi-partisan manner and in that spirit it is my hope that you will favorably vote for PHB 6583. Thank you for your consideration.