



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
March 9, 2017**

My name is Jennifer Herz and I am Counsel for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA). CBIA represents thousands of large and small companies throughout Connecticut. We have been representing Connecticut's employers for more than 200 years and we are proud to say that the vast majority of our members are small employers.

**CBIA offers this testimony in support of:**

- [S.B. No. 837](#) AN ACT CONCERNING APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH GROWTH, HIGH DEMAND JOBS.
- [S.B. No. 947](#) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WAIVER PROCESS FOR MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY TEACHING FACULTY.

Workforce development is a key issue for Connecticut's employers. Connecticut's skilled workforce is often cited as a reason employers locate and remain in Connecticut. Focusing on keeping that talent pipeline strong is a worthwhile effort. Connecticut is home to a number of key industries and we should continue to focus our workforce development efforts in these areas including, but not limited to, manufacturing, insurance, bio pharma and technology.

Specifically, the workforce need among manufacturers in the state is immediate and substantial. Manufacturing companies face a significant number of job openings. Education institutions in Connecticut are responding as best they can but the demand is so high finding innovative solutions is a top priority and concern among our members.

The concepts within SB 837 provide a good opportunity to review the state's apprenticeship programs and opportunities. CBIA has been working with our members, the Department of Labor and the Manufacturing Innovation Fund, among others, on apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship is an important part of training for many industries. Utilizing best practices from other models presents an opportunity to improve the good work that is already underway. Apprenticeship continues to be an important training component for many of our members.

Another avenue to addressing the workforce challenge is to identify innovative means to recruit qualified teachers into the Advanced Manufacturing Centers within our higher education system so that our education institutions have the tools they need to graduate students with the skills employers need. Currently, educational institutions are facing a challenge finding qualified teachers. This problem is multifaceted but we need to take action immediately to work towards a solution. SB 947 is a good step to begin to address the issue

by expanding the pool of qualified candidates. Manufacturers want to expand the pool of qualified candidates for teaching positions while ensuring high standards.

The goal is to increase the qualified pool by (i) expediting the existing waiver process or (ii) by allowing industry experience (along with teacher credentials) to serve as a substitute for master degree requirements.

We certainly appreciate that teachers in the higher education system must meet certain standards but the current process for an individual to seek an exception to those standards often slows down the hiring process. Manufacturing teachers often bring years or even decades of experience to the table instead of advanced degrees which means that industry applicants often must seek a waiver from the traditional education requirements.

We appreciate the recent changes made to the waiver process so that waiver decisions are made at the college level, however we still believe the waiver process can be a barrier to hiring and should be further streamlined. The reality of the waiver process is that by the time the individual applies for a position, goes through the hiring process and then waits for the waiver process to complete they can lose interest in the opportunity all together. Instead, we respectfully propose streamlining the waiver process so that it occurs in parallel with the end of the initial application process.

For example, the top two candidates begin the waiver process while the process to select the top candidate is completed. Alternatively, CBIA suggests revising the master degree or similar requirement for manufacturing teachers and instead require industry credentials or years of experience along with teacher certification requirements (could also include an aspect of continuing education through "teacher internships").

In CBIA's 2016 Survey of Connecticut Businesses almost half (47%) of the respondents reported a lack of skilled workers as a challenge to growth.<sup>i</sup> Addressing this challenge is key to our future. And, it's specifically important for manufacturing – an industry that represents 13.6 Billion in wages and 162,800 employees in the state.<sup>ii</sup>

Addressing hiring challenges is a multifaceted but we need to take immediate and real steps to address the need now. SB 947 represents an opportunity to do just that and CBIA urges your support of this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these bills. CBIA looks forward to the opportunity to partner on these very important workforce development efforts.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.cbia.com/resources/economy/reports-surveys/2016-survey-connecticut-businessess/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cbia.com/resources/economy/manufacturing/connecticut-manufacturings-economic-power/>