



March 14, 2018

Testimony on Proposed Bills SB 458 – An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes, and HB 5448 – An Act Concerning the Alignment of Education and Workforce Needs

Submitted by: David Downes, CAACE Program Administrator

The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education, a statewide professional organization representing providers of mandated adult education, workforce development and college transition.

Senators Boucher and Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee:

Regarding bill **SB 458**, CAACE would like to extend its appreciation for the committee's proposed reintroduction of wording in statute that would allow school districts discretion regarding the level of background checks required for adult ed enrichment, non-credit class instructors. A bill restoring this provision in statute passed by a wide margin in the House last session but failed to come to a vote in the Senate as time ran out in June.

The results this year of not having this provision that was formerly in the law have been significant. While RESCs that provide fingerprinting services to their districts might be able to charge their own programs only the state public safety fee of \$12 for fingerprinting their large number of enrichment instructors (EdAdvance has about 120), other districts may have to pay up to \$60 per instructor (Windsor Locks, among others), for the same background check, even for an instructor who may be offering just a one-night workshop. The added wait time for processing has led to canceled classes and further lost income and expenses for enrichment programs that operate basically as a community service. Other programs have had difficulty contracting with outside vendors, such as yoga instructors, because the vendor may assign different instructors on different nights, requiring additional background checks for the same course.

These enrichment classes are for adults only, for relatively short terms (about 40% are for one class only), are not for credit, and do not require teacher certification. There are no federal regulations regarding this area of education because it is not within the realm of regular K-12 public instruction. We strongly hope that this wording change in bill SB 458 will have your strongest support and can be seen as a step in the right direction of preserving enrichment programs throughout the state.

Regarding HB 5448, CAACE strongly supports a better alignment between Connecticut's education system and workforce needs. As part of the Campaign for a Working Connecticut, CAACE has studied and made recommendations for broadening the availability of pre-apprenticeship programs at the secondary level and apprenticeships for credentialed postsecondary certificate programs. Our education leaders should be encouraging better connections with the Department of Labor so partnerships between schools and employers are promoted as they are in other states that are better answering the workforce demands of growing fields of employment. Currently there are over 3,800 sponsored apprenticeships listed on the DOL website – <https://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/progsupt/appren/WorkSchedules/SponsorReport1.htm>. However, there is little connection between these opportunities for training and most secondary and postsecondary school programs in the state. Connecticut has to work through the liability and gate keeping issues that continue to cause an apprenticeship bottleneck in the career pathways to middle-skilled, well-paying jobs in the private sector. Lessons learned through the successful cooperation happening among Electric Boat, Ella Grasso Technical High School, Three Rivers Community College and other area schools need to be applied to other areas in the state.

Connecticut's adult education programs serve over 17,000 adults who are employed or who are seeking employment, including workers displaced by the advancing technology in the workplace. Adult educators are all certified teachers who use contextualized instruction to make the connections between academic skills and real world applications that facilitate learning. In addition, over twenty adult education programs have already developed partnerships with employers to improve academic and language acquisition skills needed for proficiency and advancement in the workplace. Several adult education programs also have training partnerships with postsecondary programs that integrate basic education and skills training (the IBEST model) for high demand job sectors.

Our programs will continue to contribute to improving connections between education and the workforce needs of business and industries in the state, and we look forward helping craft even better connections through policy recommendations as the result of this legislation.

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