



TESTIMONY ON SB 535 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE APPRENTICESHIP CONNECTICUT INITIATIVE

Dear members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee,

Connecticut Association of Smaller Manufacturers (CASM), is comprised of the Smaller Manufacturers Association (SMA), the New Haven Manufacturers Association (NHMA), Manufacturers Education and Training Alliance (METAL) and the New England Spring & Metal STAMPING Association and collectively represents over 400 companies with more than ten percent of the employees in the state's manufacturing sector.

Over the last few years, the Connecticut Association of Smaller Manufacturers has testified on the urgency of developing and expanding the Connecticut manufacturing workforce. And while this is a significant step to grow the number of jobs in Connecticut, we fear the complexity of this bill is masking a hidden agenda. CASM has the following concerns about this legislation:

- Partnerships are required to have an entity involved in regional economic and/or workforce development, a Regional Workforce Development Board, and a technical school **or** an industry partner. We know that our technical schools are at capacity for manufacturing training. If the goal is to fill 10,000 jobs over four years, the deck seems heavily stacked toward large corporations.
- Supporting the prior point is the **grant** of \$100M to a submarine manufacturer. The Federal government pays submarine manufacturers billions of dollars to deliver and service their products and these manufacturers can well afford their own capital spending. During a time of fiscal distress, this is an insult to the Connecticut tax payer. Imagine what we could accomplish if we gave our technical high schools a \$100M grant.
- This bill speaks of making awards based on need. How exactly is need defined? Is it near-term needs of businesses to survive or is it the needs of the under and unemployed? Or, is it the needs of political appointees? Large corporations can produce a large number of jobs that pay a living wage and can be trained in a 5 to 26 week window. The down side is that defense work is fickle and cyclical. These jobs might not last the four-year pipeline. Is there a consequence if a partnership defaults on their agreement?

CASM needs a high-skill labor force trained in multiple skills. Unfortunately, there are no easy shortcuts to develop this labor force. The large corporations this bill is meant to serve also needs the same talent we need. Large corporations are pirating our talent with the lure of Federally-funded wages we cannot afford and there is no assurance that a bill like this will slow that trend.

This bill may well result in 10,000 new jobs. Failure to do the hard work of reforming our technical education system will probably wipe out that gain. We ask to the General Assembly to invest in our long-term future.