



## Treasurer Shawn T. Wooden

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 12, 2019

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **Senate Bill 5**, *An Act Establishing a Workforce Pipeline and Job Creation Task Force*.

The bill before you would create a task force charged with making recommendations to the legislature to prepare the state's future workforce for well-paying manufacturing and technical jobs located in Connecticut. I commend the committee for tackling this issue -- one that is, in my view, vital to Connecticut's future.

Manufacturing, and especially advanced manufacturing that requires a relatively high level of computer and design skills, is undergoing a resurgence in Connecticut.

But there are not nearly enough skilled workers, or training programs, to meet this pressing demand. Today, there are roughly 13,000 unfilled manufacturing jobs in Connecticut.

And over the next two decades, it is estimated that Connecticut's manufacturing industry will need between 25,000 and 35,000 new skilled workers for the state's 4,100 manufacturers.

I can't think of a more immediate and vital need that ought to be addressed through the coordinated efforts of the state, business and academic communities.

It is vital not only for individuals in our workforce, but for the very future of Connecticut's economy.

As State Treasurer, I am committed to ensuring that Connecticut's residents have access to good jobs and that the state's economy is ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This means that our residents have access to good jobs as well as ensuring that employers in need of high-skilled, advanced manufacturing workers are able to fill that need.

To me, this bill -- and the task force it would establish -- are concrete steps forward toward doing just that.

Last fall, I visited an Advanced Manufacturing workforce-development program at Grasso Technical High School in Groton, which is part of the Eastern Connecticut Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative. It receives both state and federal funding, and mainly serves as a pipeline to produce workers for Electric Boat and the small manufacturers in the EB supply chain.

The program brings together key stakeholders from government, nonprofits, and the private sector to help address workforce needs in southeastern Connecticut. The jobs that are being filled are good jobs - they provide wages and career paths leading to financial independence and security, offering second career opportunities and retraining for the existing workforce while also attracting and keeping young people in the state.

Since 2016, it has a better than 90% placement rate for more than 1,000 workers with 140 employers. It brings together key stakeholders from government, nonprofits, and the private sector to help address workforce needs in the region.

This program is exactly the kind of successful workforce development partnership that the task force should look to as an example and study how it can be replicated across the state.

As State Treasurer, not surprisingly, I spend a lot of time focused on making the right investments to generate excellent returns. Investing in our workforce in a way that supports our in state businesses community is an investment that makes sense. It's an investment that will generate excellent returns for our residents, our business community and our State as a whole.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation. I look forward to working together to ensure that Connecticut's economy and workforce are ready for the future.