Bill No.: HB-7317
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING URBAN AND RURAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.
Vote Date: 3/19/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 3/12/2019
File No.: 

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Labor and Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:
Connecticut has experienced persistent inequalities in its economy which has adversely impacted chronically-unemployed and underserved communities, and primarily people of color (POC).

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:
Kurt Westby, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Labor
The bill seeks to develop a grant program for developing and increasing the workforce in distressed municipalities by permitting MBEs to establish work-based educational programs in conjunction with boards of education. DOL appreciates the bill's intent, but lacks the staff and funding to administer a new program. The programs currently operated by DOL may provide the training, apprenticeships, and job placement opportunities desired by job seekers the bill’s intent is meant to provide.

State of Connecticut Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO)
CHRO already administers the contract compliance program for small business enterprises, including minority business enterprises (MBEs). As such, the agency is acutely aware of the need to address persistent inequities by offering access to the job market and support for struggling small minority-owned businesses in both urban and rural communities.
NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director, Hispanic Federation
Economic empowerment and financial stability are among the Hispanic Federation’s highest legislative priorities. There are many economic challenges facing the Latino community in Connecticut. Through economic empowerment, Connecticut’s communities of color can be inextricably linked in driving the growth and recovery of Connecticut’s economy in urban and rural communities.

David McGuire, Executive Director, ACLU-CT
Businesses owned by racial and ethnic minorities, women, and People with Disabilities (PWD) strengthen Connecticut. Enabling minority business enterprises to partner with school-to-work programs would be beneficial for all involved, and a boon for the Connecticut economy.

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Current work-based learning programs serve only a small portion of local students and youth. The Foundation has supported Hartford Student Internship Program (HSIP). The bill would provide additional opportunities to assist more students gain exposure to career paths. Nonprofits provide the majority of placement opportunities for youth. The bill would potentially expand for-profit placement opportunities for youth. Minority-owned businesses are struggling and need additional funding and support.

Bernard Thomas, Executive Director, Hartford Knights Youth Organization
The organization’s mission is to promote self-esteem, social competence, and academic achievement through mentoring. Among those the organization serves, 43% are Hispanic youth and 37% are African-American. The bill would help support job training programs and job placement opportunities for youth in distressed urban and rural communities.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted.

Reported by: Bryan Anderson Date: 3/25/19