

Education Committee

March 8, 2021

HB 6617: AN ACT CONCERNING AUTHORIZATION OF STATE GRANT COMMITMENTS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS AND REVISIONS TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECTS STATUTES

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education:

My name is Roland Bishop, and I am the elected Secretary/Treasurer of CSEA SEIU Local 2001, a labor union representing approximately 25,000 active and retired public and private sector workers. I am also the elected president of the P3B bargaining unit council that represents state school teachers, vocational instructors, department heads and principals - 150 certified staff in the Department of Corrections. I work full time as a state school teacher at the Willard-Cybulski Correctional Institution, the department's reentry facility. I offer the following testimony on House Bill 6617.

I come before you today to promote and discuss the importance of in person vocational instruction and delivery by the staff of the legal school district, Unified School District #1 (USD #1), within the Department of Correction.

The current incarcerated population at the states only women's facility, York CI, is approximately 545. The historical data informs us that approximately 95% of the incarcerated population will eventually return to the community. This number drives the need for the continued success of pre-release vocational programs. The success of pre-release vocational skills training, what we do in USD #1, is critical to continue to feed candidates with employable and certified skills for reentry programming. An example of this higher order skills training occurs at the York CI School Vocational Carpentry program. We sought out and successfully worked with local trade unions to provide opportunities for apprenticeships for graduates of the Vocational Carpentry Program at York CI. Two women secured interviews for paid apprenticeships with the construction laborer's local. Think of the possibilities!

Currently the Carpentry Program at the York CI school is suspended. Recent evaluations establish the need for funding for modernizing the shop area in the school. USD #1 is not directly funded within the department's budget. Success as noted here has been achieved through talent, entrepreneurship, grant, and Title 1 funding. Nevertheless, with sweat equity and project costs of less than \$80,000 the build out of the Carpentry shop to meet code and safety requirements can be accomplished. Some costs are below:

- Install dust collection system to provide a safe work environment (old existing unit in Enfield CI). **\$10,000**
- Install emergency shutdown buttons throughout the shop to provide a safe working environment.
- Install an electrical distribution system that will be able to provide the proper power and voltage to the equipment that will be placed in a carpentry shop.
- Install new emergency lighting and exit signage, to maintain proper egress during a power failure.
- items above to do with electrical **\$40,000.**
- Relocate eyewash station to provide safe working conditions in case any foreign objects and chemicals enter one's eyes. **\$1000**

An investment to bring back online a robust pre-release Vocational Carpentry skills program provided by USD #1, strategically partnered with reentry programming (non-traditional jobs for women) increases the capacity for successful, responsible transition to the community. The staff of USD #1 believe we have provided a model that is the vehicle you seek for reform – as always it is education.

I want to thank the committee for your time and ask you to include a grant commitment on behalf of the state for this important project. I would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Roland Bishop
Secretary/Treasurer, CSEA SEIU Local 2001
President, P3B Council