

# A BETTER WAY TO A PROSPEROUS CONNECTICUT

## A VIBRANT WORKFORCE



### Senate Republican Caucus



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# A CONNECTICUT WHERE PEOPLE CAN PURSUE MEANINGFUL CAREERS AND RAISE A FAMILY!

With Connecticut's job growth continuing to lag behind the national average, coupled with stagnant and paralyzing personal income growth rates, the Senate Republican Caucus believes it's time to take **COMMON SENSE ACHIEVABLE ACTION** to:

- Enhance career pathway development
- Promote Job Fairs
- Establish a Healthcare Academy
- Engage young people post high school
- Require a state-wide workforce, jobs training audit
- Encourage Buy CT to Build CT
- Address Transportation Barriers to Employment
- Address Teacher and Paraprofessional Shortages
- Promote Financial Literacy Curriculum



Though Connecticut has made progress this past year, young people are graduating to an unemployment pool of over 100,000 and many are under skilled. Even if our unemployed were to find work, Connecticut faces a sizable workforce shortage. Making matters worse, the state's **generational poverty remains a pervasive impediment to employment**, especially in cities. Notably, income growth is NOT keeping up with the cost of living, in a state that has become increasingly unaffordable to live and raise family, and let's not forget about the suffocating energy prices, some of the highest in the country, and an exorbitant cost of health care.

Senate Republicans are seeking to address these issues by focusing efforts on the areas outlined above.

Connecticut is a beautiful state, with tremendous assets and a dynamic, motivated workforce that simply wants to be productive, enjoy life and raise a family. The Senate Republican Caucus is doing it's part and putting forth **legislative initiatives TODAY for a BETTER TOMORROW**.

## We CAN do better!

- CT Ranks **46th** out of 50 states in BUSINESS GROWTH (1)
- CT Ranks **43rd** out of 50 states in ECONOMIC GROWTH (1)
- CT Ranks **40th** out of 50 states in POPULATION GROWTH (1)
- CT Ranks **46th** out of 50 states in OPPORTUNITY (2)

**There is a better way. We must create an environment where all jobs in all parts of our state can grow and thrive, where employers can afford to support higher wages, and where all young people have an opportunity to access these good paying jobs.**

(1) <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/economic-profiles/connecticut/#:~:text=Overview%20of%20the%20Connecticut%20Economy,US%20states%20by%20growth%20rate.>

(2) <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/Connecticut>



# ENHANCE CAREER PATHWAYS



**Develop programs and present information related to trade schools at middle and high schools (SB 114).**

While job prospects are bleak for many, there are pockets of success in the state of preparing students in high school to enter the workforce in good paying jobs. Our plan requires the State Department of Education to work with and study successful school districts like Bristol and Stratford to make high school students workforce ready, then develop a program that other school districts can implement to prepare students to meet local workforce demands. We also require the State Department of Education to change how it measures school success by including preparing students for the workforce, not just college, as an indicator of success.

During the 2021 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly passed into law a provision requiring high schools to encourage the completion of FAFSA forms. Encouraging students to apply for federal government aid in the form of grants and loans to attend a two or four year college is not the only path our high schools should be promoting. Rather, a career as a professional tradesperson is another path that will provide a lifetime of financial independence and economic stability and often without the massive amounts of student loan debt faced by attendees of a traditional college program.

We propose requiring area high schools to discuss the benefits of attending a trade school alongside any discussions of enrolling at a traditional two or four year college.





## RETURN OF JOB FAIRS

Job fairs open students' eyes to career possibilities and help them find jobs that meet their skill sets. Connecting students to jobs early on is important to enable students to obtain employment, learn about the job search and interview process, and empower them to build a better and brighter future. This proposal requires the State Department of Education to develop guidelines for hosting successful job fairs, and survey each high school annually as to the number of job fairs held and the results (**SB 117**).

## VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS RECRUITMENT

Vo-tech programs offer incredible opportunities for Connecticut students. More can be done to enhance recruitment at the middle school level to attend vo-tech programs. We must ensure Connecticut's vocational-technical high schools are within reach for youth and are being discussed with students at an early age. This proposal will reestablish a vo-tech ambassador program to share information with students in middle schools to make more younger school children aware of future opportunities.





# HEALTH CARE ACADEMIES

Connecticut is facing a shortage of health care workers, an issue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Connecticut continues to experience an increasing demand in health care, the state is faced with significant shortages in many areas. Health care workers are facing burn out and lack of health care professionals is straining the entire workforce health care ecosystem.

To help meet Connecticut residents' health care needs, Senate Republicans are proposing legislation that requires the State Department of Education, Department of Public Health, and Department of Labor to work with the Connecticut Hospital Association to develop curriculum for high school "Health Care Academies" to include training and certification for high school graduates to work in high demand health care occupations.

The program would be open to any high school to train current students to fill in demand jobs. Students would complete necessary, in-person training at local hospitals and obtain certification upon completion of the program, graduation, and local hospital residencies.

This program will give high school students the training and certification to obtain good-paying health care jobs upon graduation. It will also help ease health care worker shortage by increasing the number of individuals trained and certified to fill demand health care jobs (**SB 115**).





# ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE POST HIGH SCHOOL

**Require the Commissioner of Labor to develop a program to reach out to high school graduates not attending college or working in a trade within 3 months of graduation regarding alternative pathways to careers.**

One third of high school students don't pursue college or the military after school. It's also been estimated that one third of Americans have no plan after graduating from school. After leaving high school, far too many young people fall off a cliff. They no longer have the supports and guidance available in a high school setting and must navigate an overwhelming system of workforce programs, jobs, training, and education opportunities without that support.

We propose launching an outreach campaign run by the Department of Labor to engage those young people in the months after graduation with information about alternative pathways to careers and where recent high school graduates can go for guidance and resources to navigate jobs. We also seek to require the State Department of Education to work with local boards of education to develop sample pathway career plans for those who don't have plans after graduation.

**1/3 OF HIGH  
SCHOOL STUDENTS  
DON'T PURSUE COLLEGE OR  
THE MILITARY AFTER  
SCHOOL, ACCORDING TO  
OFFICE OF WORKFORCE  
STRATEGY (OWS)**



# WORKFORCE PROGRAM AUDIT

Senate Republicans have introduced a bill requiring the State Auditors to conduct a performance audit on the effectiveness of workforce programs funded by the state with the objective of providing better support to the **most effective workforce programs**.

Initiate a review and audit of workforce development programs to assess for efficiency, effectiveness, performance, and compliance, and recommend changes as needed to better support the most successful programming.

Will ensure state investments are maximized for programs that demonstrate proven results in skills training, employment placement and retention, and career advancement (**SB 154**).



## BENEFITS CLIFF TASK FORCE

The "Benefits Cliff," unfortunately faced by many individuals needing a hand up and seeking meaningful, sustained employment, are reluctant to fully participate in the workforce due to fear of losing benefits that they've come to rely on to live, must be addressed by this legislature. **It's a real problem that needs bipartisan attention NOW!**

Throughout the years, legislators have discussed this less than ideal situation; however, policies and initiatives have not materialized. Senate Republicans are calling for a taskforce that is going to review the issues robustly and make actionable recommendations. While it's challenging work, it must get done.





## BUY CT TO BUILD CT

Connecticut's defense industry is a vibrant job creator and economic engine. Connecticut has the skilled workforce and the industry leaders who can produce the best goods and services to keep our nation safe. Connecticut must do more to harness this success to spread growth throughout our state. Specifically, we must encourage the defense industry to work with in-state suppliers whenever possible and grow Connecticut jobs.

The "Buy CT to Build CT" program will incentivize defense contractors to create and support jobs. It will establish a program to provide incentives to defense contractors and subcontractors that are headquartered in the state and make long-term commitments to maintain and grow jobs in the state. It will also provide sales tax exemptions and tax credits to defense contractors that work with in-state supply line manufacturers, instead of buying parts and products from out-of-state companies. By steering defense contractors toward in-state suppliers, we can help foster relationships that will grow jobs, strengthen our communities and bring more opportunities to our state (**SB 241**).

## GROW JOBS IN CT'S FLAGSHIP INDUSTRY

Connecticut is known as the insurance capital of the world. The industry employs an estimated 48,500 people in Connecticut. We must always strive to advance and support good paying jobs in Connecticut, including jobs created by our flagship industry. This proposal would require the Insurance Commissioner to promote development of, and employment opportunities within the insurance industry in Connecticut. It encourages the department to examine newer areas of potential insurance growth such as: Insurtech, captive insurance, cybersecurity and data protection (**SB 231**).







# ELIMINATE TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS TO WORK-BASED LEARNING

**Establish a task force to examine the barriers to transportation for work-based learning experiences.**

Work-based learning allows students to get hands-on training from an employer while in high school. Students gain real-world work experience and learn skills through hands-on experiences. Instead of schools having to build out complex work shop areas, students can learn directly in the field. Through partnerships with local companies, students gain experience in transitioning from school to work and make connections in the workforce.

One of the challenges in establishing work-based learning relationships is transportation. Some programs strive to utilize ride sharing credits, but that can pose legal challenges when working with minors. Some programs leave transportation up to the student, which can be a challenge and a barrier to participation, especially if a student does not have a car or access to a public transportation route that directly connects to a participating business.

To examine this issue and identify solutions, we propose establishing a working group to investigate barriers to transportation for work-based learning experiences. This group will investigate potential solutions and work collaboratively with the Department of Transportation, Department of Education, and other stakeholders (**SB 243**).



# ADDRESS TEACHER SHORTAGE

## ACCELERATE TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN TRADES & EXPAND LICENSE RECIPROCITY

**Require the State Department of Education to develop a new program for an accelerated pathway to certification for teachers in trades.**

Establish alternate routes to certification to make it easier for those working in the trades to teach. We propose working with the State Department of Education to develop an alternative route to enable individuals trained and licensed in the trades to more easily obtain a certification to teach in workforce development programs in Connecticut high schools (**SB 114**).

**Expand the State Department Of Education's reciprocity opportunities for out of state teachers in an effort to end the teacher shortage.**

Teacher license reciprocity allows candidates who hold an out-of-state license to obtain a license in a receiving state, subject to meeting state-specific requirements. Reciprocity agreements allow states to work through variations in licensing systems to coordinate license transfers and fill vacant teaching positions with qualified candidates. We propose expanding Connecticut's reciprocity opportunities to assist in the recruitment of teachers (**SB 271**).



# FINANCIAL LITERACY

**Require financial literacy education in Connecticut schools.**

Over 60% of Americans live paycheck to paycheck and struggle to save money for short-term or long-term financial goals. This is a challenge for middle income families, with 41% of Americans earning between \$150,000 to \$200,000 per year living paycheck to paycheck. **Credit card** and **student loan debt** are also at historic highs, at a whopping **\$930.6 billion** and **\$1,757 trillion**, respectively.

## Total U.S. Consumer Debt: \$19.6 Trillion

Financial literacy is an important life skill that can help the future generation better manage their personal finances and advance themselves in life.

Financial literacy classes early in a person's life can help them make better financial decisions later in life to best support themselves, their families, and careers.

While Connecticut currently allows for schools to offer financial literacy classes as an elective, this proposal recommends requiring that schools offer such classes. Students would not be mandated to take the course, but schools would be required to offer financial literacy courses as an option to all students (**SB 18**).

