

**Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee
Testimony of Interim Executive Director Ellen Solek
February 23, 2023**

Thank you Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I would like to begin by introducing myself. I am Dr. Ellen Solek and I am honored to serve as the Interim Executive Director for the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (hereafter referenced as CTECS). I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss Governor Lamont's proposed CTECS budget for FY 2024-25.

As many of you are aware, CTECS is in its first year as an independent agency after formally separating from the State Department of Education in July 2022. As one of our many important initiatives, we have created and adopted a new and forward-thinking Strategic Operating Plan for 2022 and beyond. The framework for this newly adopted Strategic Operating Plan begins with a vision and mission that are in direct alignment with many of the Governor's statewide workforce initiatives. In particular, we are passionate about preparing trade-bound students, through exemplary programming and practices, to meet the skilled workforce needs in Connecticut.

The Governor's budget proposal includes appropriations for CTECS totaling \$192,225,449 for FY 2024 and \$194,941,935 for FY 2025. We are very appreciative of the Governor's ongoing support as evidenced by the significant additional proposed funding to expand trade offerings and provide additional fiscal/administrative positions. The fiscal positions are critical to ensuring that the system continues to function effectively as an independent agency. The additional funding to expand trade offerings is especially helpful during a time when education and workforce development are facing huge productivity and accountability demands throughout the state. In recognition of these challenges, CTECS remains determined to exceed the bar while remaining fiscally responsible, programmatically forward-thinking, and operationally efficient.

As stated in the Governor's recent Economic Report, some of the key areas for statewide growth are identified as Transportation, Housing, Energy and Environment, Healthcare, Education and Workforce Development. CTECS has the unique opportunity to directly contribute to each of these key areas. For example:

Transportation: CTECS is pursuing significant federal green energy grant funding to expand our student transportation options to include the purchase and acquisition of seven million dollars of electric buses and charging stations. Consequently, our transportation students will be exposed to electric vehicle technology and have opportunities to train in the installation of the requisite standard and high-speed charging stations across the agency.

Housing: CTECS continues to expand and improve trade offerings in the construction fields including Electrical, Plumbing, Manufacturing, and more so as to meet the ever-growing demands of the state's housing market.

Workforce Development and Healthcare: CTECS is working closely with the Governor's Office of Workforce Strategy, the state's Community College System, the State Department of Education, the Department of Labor and others to plan, develop and implement expansion of technical and career programs for grades 9-12 including Health Technology, Information Technology, Aviation Maintenance, and more. In addition, we continue to foster impactful and enduring partnerships with significant businesses and industries across the state.

These are just some of the initiatives that demonstrate that CTECS is a significant contributor to the Governor's vision for a strong and vibrant economy as we become Connecticut's primary workforce pipeline.

In summary, I thank you Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to working with you and with the Governor throughout this legislative session. I welcome any questions you may have at this time.