



Catherine H. Smith
Commissioner

Date: November 13, 2015

To: The Honorable Andrew M. Fleischmann, Co-Chair, Education Committee
The Honorable Gayle S. Slossberg, Co-Chair, Education Committee
The Honorable Gail Lavielle, Ranking Member, Education Committee
The Honorable Antonietta Boucher, Ranking Member, Education
The Honorable Danté Bartolomeo, Co-Chair, Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Roberta Willis, Co-Chair, Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Kevin Witkos, Ranking Member, Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Whit Betts, Ranking Member, Higher Education Committee
The Honorable Edwin A. Gomes, Co-Chair, Labor Committee
The Honorable Peter A. Tercyak, Co-Chair, Labor Committee
The Honorable Tony Hwang, Ranking Member, Labor Committee
The Honorable David Rutigliano, Ranking Member, Labor Committee
Members of the Education Committee
Members of the Higher Education Committee
Members of the Labor Committee

From: Catherine Smith, Commissioner
Department of Economic and Community Development

Re: **DECD and the Technical High School System**

In accordance with 10-95h (b) of the General Statutes, the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) provides the following information on its relationship with the Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS).

Connecticut's technical high schools have an integral role to play in creating a skilled workforce and driving economic activity in the state of Connecticut. As a result, DECD and CTHSS have forged a strong relationship in recent years. Some examples of our collaboration include:

- As the commissioner of DECD, I serve on the CT Technical High School System board. My position on the board facilitates better coordination and communication on all workforce matters. I regularly attend the meetings, which have been held in the various schools around the state.
- DECD recently issued the latest version of the state's economic development strategy. CTHSS plays an important role in that strategy. Ensuring that Connecticut has a skilled and creative workforce in place is critical to our ability to attract and retain businesses and grow high-paying jobs. By improving partnerships with the business community, the system can better to provide students with the necessary background - particularly in manufacturing and technology - that the market is seeking.
- Connecticut recently was awarded the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership designation from the Economic Development Administration, which will

provide the state preference and access to approximately \$1 billion of grant opportunities. The focus of the designation is on supporting the aerospace and shipbuilding industries through resource investment in workforce, supply chain, and innovation. CTHSS is one of our partners on this initiative.

- Getting students excited about careers in industries such as manufacturing is important to ensuring the state has the pipeline of future workforce talent needed to grow and compete. DECD recently supported a series of Young Manufacturers Academy (YMA) summer programs at W. F. Kaynor Technical High School in Waterbury, Platt Technical High School in Milford, and E.C. Goodwin Technical High School in New Britain. These programs are part of Connecticut Dream It. Do It., which also sponsors “Dream It – Do It Manufacturing Month,” an effort that successfully highlights the many positive aspects of pursuing careers in manufacturing throughout October.
- This year we also focused on the need for increased effort in technology education. The technical schools have instituted some robotics and coding courses – all of which I view very positively. I hope we can continue to expand in these areas.

Beyond our partnerships with CTHSS, DECD regularly collaborates with key stakeholders in the state’s education community. As commissioner, I routinely provide information to the appropriate agencies regarding workforce training gaps identified by the business community and have been working with the Department of Education on a number of STEM-related (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) issues. These types of exchange are crucial to meeting the state’s needs for a talented and innovative workforce.

Thank you for your continued interest in—and support of—the department’s efforts to boost the competitiveness of the state’s industries and businesses. As always, feel free to reach out to me at anytime if you have any questions or concerns.