

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE FINANCE, REVENUE & BONDING COMMITTEE
March 25, 2025

Dr. Alice Pritchard, Executive Director
Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS)

Co-Chair Senator Miller, Co-Chair Representative Napoli, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Representative Piscopo and members of the Bonding Subcommittee:

My name is Dr. Alice Pritchard, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System also known as (CTECS). I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony commenting on **SB 1247 An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds for the State**. We are grateful to the committee, and Governor Lamont for the commitment and continued support of the academic and trade goals of CTECS.

For over 100 years, CTECS has been the leading force in Career Technical Education (CTE) in the State of Connecticut. Our mission at CTECS is to prepare trade-bound students to meet the skilled workforce needs in Connecticut through exemplary trade and academic programming. We envision CTECS as the primary pipeline for Connecticut's skilled labor workforce. CTECS operates 17 diploma-granting technical high schools, with 11 career clusters representing 32 in-demand career pathways, one technical education center, and two airframe mechanics and aircraft maintenance programs. The school system provides a direct employment pipeline for high school students as well as a foundation for post-secondary education. This year, CTECS has approximately 11,300 high school students from 166 sending towns. In addition, CTECS serves approximately 1500 adult education students in aviation and apprenticeships programs.

We are confident, if approved, **SB 1247** will provide the necessary funds for CTECS to continue to offer the top-notch educational and trade opportunities our student body deserves and the vital resources to carry out the agency's mission. Please find in the narrative below and the document attached our responses to the committee questions. I appreciate the committee's support and thank you for your time and consideration.

CTECS responses to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee per the questions outlined below:

As part of the hearing, the GO bonding subcommittee is looking for a general update on bond-funded programs administered by your agency. Specifically, programs with FY 26 or FY 27 Governor proposed authorizations (see attachment for a summary of the Governor's proposal) along with other programs with a previously authorized but unallocated balance. These programs are reflected in OFA's unallocated balance report, available here (https://cga.ct.gov/ofa/Documents/year/UAB/2025UAB-20250106_Bond%20Authorizations%20Available%20for%20Allocation.pdf). Please reach out to [Eric Michael Gray](#) or [Claudia Rodriguez](#), OFA's bond analysts, if there are any discrepancies or errors in the attached or linked documentation, preferably in advance of the agency's hearing.

CTECS has reviewed the 1/1/2025 "Unallocated Balance report" provide by OPM. CTECS has two Bond Authorizations with unallocated balances. PA14-98 Sec. 82 maintains ~\$3M authorized to institute an after-hours and adult education pilot program at several CTECS schools. PA 16-4 Sec. 195 added \$5M and extended that pilot to additional schools. CTECS requested allocation of some of these funds in March 2024. Ultimately, funds were allocated from our general infrastructure (now fully allocated) authorization instead. CTECS is utilizing these funds to expand and maintain existing adult programs. CTECS plans to continue expansion of its Adult and After-hours programming by requesting allocation of these funds over the next two years. CTECS did not request additional funds authorization for these programs in FY26/27.

The subcommittee is likely to want additional information regarding the proposal to remove CTECS from DAS's school construction program and how that will impact CTECS project funding going forward. To this end, DAS is being asked to be available during the time of the CTECS subcommittee hearing, which is immediately followed by DAS's hearing. While not being requested formally, it may be beneficial for someone from CTECS to remain at the hearing for at least a portion of DAS's hearing.

CTECS is aware of, and supports, this change as it will streamline the review and approval process for renovation and construction of its facilities. CTECS will be impacted as follows, but anticipates that all can be overcome as the language is finalized in the relevant bills:

1. Large "Priority" projects will be affected. Historically we would have used the OGA (DAS Office of [School Construction] Grants Administration) annual application and DAS "Priority" project process to request consideration of funding. Larger/longer term projects can accommodate the proposed change and CTECS has accounted for them by requesting project-specific Capital Bond Fund Authorizations (e.g., Platt, Goodwin, Windham, Vinal) as traditional authorizations in lieu of going through the OGA.

2. Small- to medium-sized “Priority” projects may be the most impacted by this change. These projects are faster-paced and result from industry trends and professional recommendations that would require small renovations and equipment upgrades/changes to minimize the delay in CTECS’ ability to respond to these needs. CTECS would utilize the districtwide facility infrastructure funding proposed by the Governor for these initiatives.
3. “Non-Priority” or emergency projects will be affected as they are currently funded through OGA utilizing their monthly application process. CTECS has anticipated this change and included funds for these projects in its Capital Bond Fund Authorizations for general infrastructure improvements/repairs.

As the final language is being considered, we would ask that funds currently authorized within the OGA be addressed by either transferring them to CTECS as a traditional bond authorization for future allocation as the projects are ready for execution, or maintained with the OGA, but earmarked for easier access when needed by CTECS/DAS for project execution.

For programs with Governor proposed authorizations, please be prepared to discuss the program, including:

1. ***What is the goal of the program?***
2. ***What stage of the project does the proposed authorization fund? For example, is this design funding only, with a future authorization expected for construction costs, or is this the annual amount of an ongoing program?***
3. ***Are there any other funds (e.g., federal, state, local) that will support the program?***
4. ***When is the expected completion date for the program?***

Answers to Questions 1 through 4 Above Listed Per program:

General Infrastructure (Sec. 2 (n) 106) –The Governor’s proposed FY26/27 budget provides for general infrastructure improvements. As these funds are allocated, CTECS will distribute them for use on critical initiatives, including deferred maintenance, facility upgrades, equipment, energy efficiency, security, HVAC/IAQ, operations/maintenance equipment, and student transportation. CTECS maintains an ongoing list of capital improvement projects (Capital Improvement Program Plan, submitted to OPM/DAS in October 2024. See attached) and prioritizes available funds to execute as appropriate including reserved funds for unforeseen emergencies. Of the known projects, some can be executed without professional design assistance, while others are budgeted accordingly to include engagement of design services consultants. The general infrastructure program is intended to be an annual/continued investment for

maintenance and upkeep of these State assets. A continued investment in modernization and upkeep will result in reduced operating expenses for minor repairs and utility costs.

Goodwin THS (Sec. 21 (k)(1) 515) – The goal of this program is to execute a series of projects inclusive of deferred maintenance (envelope improvements, athletic field repairs), as well as some programmatic enhancements (bus/maintenance garage, kitchen renovation, multi-purpose room conversion, etc.). These projects are planned and prioritized, and ready for initiation with DAS-Construction Services once funds are authorized. These will require the engagement of a design professional to prepare construction documents. Once the new construction is complete, this program will be complete.

IT Support and Equipment (Sec. 2 (n) 109) – Purchase of new and replacement technology equipment for the CTECS. Technology equipment includes computer hardware, smart boards, networking devices and other technology peripherals for the classroom. This request is rooted in the critical need to modernize and enhance the technological infrastructure across all technical high schools within the system. As CTECS continues to expand, and support students in new ways, we seek to integrate digital tools and resources into the curriculum. This will be essential to ensure that students and teachers have access to up-to-date technology that supports 21st-century learning. The authorization will fund the acquisition of advanced equipment, improve network infrastructure, digital content support, hardware to support health and safety, and resources to meet state and federal mandates. This investment is crucial for preparing students with the digital literacy and technical skills necessary to thrive in today's workforce, ensuring that CTECS remains a leader in technical education. This is intended to be a revolving investment to maintain effective and modern equipment supporting instruction.

New Windham THS (Sec. 2 (n) 111) – A request to supplement prior-authorized funds (currently with OGA) for design and construction of a new technical high school at proposed site in Mansfield and decommission/surplus of the existing facility in Willimantic. This project is in a pre-planning phase. Prior funds authorized through OGA will allow CTECS and DAS-

Construction Services to initiate the project and begin design. The timing of the new bond funds will allow continuation of the design and construction without delay. Once the new construction is complete, this program will be complete.

Specific to Question 3, re: alternate funds. CTECS seeks opportunities to improve the educational environment for our students and reduce the costs for taxpayers. In FY25 CTECS employed a full-time grants coordinator to help expand these opportunities. CTECS has been successful in finding federal grants and private-industry donations to enhance our offerings. For example, CTECS has received a federal award for our conversion to Electric School Buses (\$7.6M rec'd; \$9.8M on hold). An additional \$1M has been awarded by DEEP to support this initiative. CTECS looks to maximize opportunities for the benefit of our students and taxpayers.

For programs with unallocated balances:

- 1. Does your agency need the unallocated balance?***
 - a. If so, for what purpose?***
 - b. Within what time frame?***
- 2. Are the unallocated funds obligated, designated, or otherwise attached to projects, or are funds available for future needs as they arise?***
 - a. If attached to projects, please provide information on the projects.***
- 3. Allocation of funds***
 - a. When was the last time funds for the program were allocated, if ever?***
 - b. Have the funds been requested for allocation by the bond commission? If so, how much and when?***
- 4. What impediments, if any, have there been in accessing and using the bond funds?***
- 5. For programs with recent allocations, what portion of the allocation has been spent?***
 - a. What is the typical time between allocation and final expenditure of the funds?***

Answers to Questions 1 through 5 above:

CTECS' unallocated balances from prior authorized bond funds are limited to adult and after-hours programs, which is a priority for the district. Use of these funds will support facility modifications and equipment purchases to allow expanded access to programs, as well as new and replacement equipment supporting these programs. The unallocated balances have not been encumbered and will be requested for allocation throughout FYs 26/27. Once allocated these funds will be utilized on existing state purchasing contracts or for bid solicitations for the purchase of equipment or facility improvements. To date, \$434,000 has been allocated and spent. An additional \$1.25M was requested for allocation in March 2024 but the allocation was ultimately switched to our general infrastructure authorization. Upon allocation, funds usually take 6-8 weeks to be made available. At that time purchases from state contract vendors can be made immediately (unless delayed for installation during the summer). More complex projects may require support from design professionals to ensure coordinating infrastructure is available, in these cases that process can add up to 6 months for

expenditures. Since there are suitable funds available for allocation, CTECS did not seek to expand this program for FY26/27.

6. *If increased bond authorizations have been proposed for the program for FY 25, what expansion or increase of projects is expected and how quickly are the new funds anticipated to be needed?*
- a. *Do you anticipate a further need for new authorizations past the biennium?*

Answers Listed Per Program:

General Infrastructure (Sec. 2 (n) 106) – IT support and Equipment (Sec. 2 (n) 109) are “rolling” programs. These programs have been slowed by the limited funds availability in the prior biennium. As we transitioned from the State Department of Education, no authorizations were requested in FY24/25 which led to a list of deferred maintenance, facility/equipment upgrades, and program enhancement projects covered by existing bond funds and annual operating expense accounts. CTECS intends to utilize the proposed investment to begin completing these efforts. Upon authorization CTECS will be making a request for allocation to the Bond Commission at the first available meeting so we can begin these projects. We anticipate these programs will need a continued investment beyond FY26/27.

Goodwin THS (Sec. 1 (k) 515) – This is a new project expected to be initiated in FY27, a request for allocation will be made in FY27 to initiate this project and we anticipate the project will not exceed available funds.

Windham THS (Sec. 2 (n) 111) – A portion of the funds will be requested immediately (first available Bond Commission Meeting) for allocation to support the pre-design and design phases. A second allocation will be requested to support bidding and construction. After construction begins, we do not anticipate additional authorizations being required.

****Please see attached file titled CTECS Capital Expenditure Request for additional reference. ****