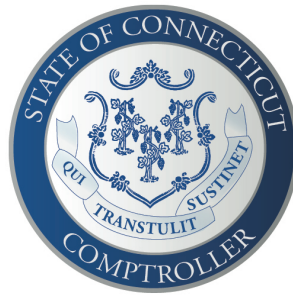


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**Written Testimony
Comptroller Kevin Lembo
March 6, 2018**

**Concerning
S.B. 51: An Act Establishing A Small Business Manufacturing
Pipeline.
&
S.B. 213: An Act Concerning The Development Of Public-Private Partnerships For
Apprenticeship And Work-Based Opportunities.
&
S.B. 351: An Act Concerning Apprenticeship.**

Good morning Senator Bye, Representative Haddad, Senator Linares, Representative Staneski, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

Thank you for raising these bills and for the opportunity to show my support for expanding opportunities for middle class workers, and leveling the playing field for small businesses in Connecticut.

Manufacturing is the fastest-growing segment of our state economy. Connecticut is home to over 4,000 manufacturing firms supporting critical industries that are key to future economic growth including health care, finance, biotech, aerospace and defense. Yet a recent report from the Connecticut Business and Industry Association in partnership with NSF Regional Center for Next Generation Manufacturing and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities details an immediate need for 13,601 new workers by the end of 2018.

A skills gap exists in Connecticut. Businesses in thriving sectors are looking to hire, yet often struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills. State government must work quickly, and in partnership with the private sector, to train workers capable of filling those open positions and to prepare more Connecticut workers for future employment opportunities.

I have long supported apprenticeship programs in Connecticut as a means to close that gap. Learning a skill or trade alongside an experienced mentor, or within an established company, is an excellent means of beginning a new career. Using the benefit of focused, hands-on experience, apprenticeships often develop into well-paying, middle class jobs.

Apprenticeships result in a knowledgeable, skilled and stable pipeline of workers specifically qualified for our state's needs. According to the US Department of Labor, 91 percent of trainees completing an apprenticeship program are still employed nine months later.

The concepts in these bills are important. I would suggest that the state examine its existing resources — primarily in the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Labor — to enact the goals of this legislation without creating additional levels of state bureaucracy, and while maximizing investment of taxpayer dollars.

Our economy depends on a skilled workforce and the success of our local businesses – big and small. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm of this committee to prioritize the issue and I look forward to working alongside you to strengthen the future of Connecticut's workforce.