



## *Calling for Strategic Investments in Connecticut's Workforce*

### **Campaign for a Working Connecticut (CWCT) 2012 Legislative Agenda**

Connecticut needs a strong, clear vision for addressing both the supply and demand sides of the employment equation. With his new administration, the Governor has the opportunity to announce boldly that our state will have the most highly-skilled, best-educated, most productive workforce in the country. The Governor has the opportunity and the power to focus all of the resources at his disposal—policies, investments, programs, and personnel—to achieve this goal and to fully engage CT's citizens in the economy.

Connecticut's talented, innovative people truly are our leading "natural" resource. To take advantage of these assets - and spur business growth and job creation - we must address the workforce needs of our state's employers through the effective integration of pragmatic workforce-related investments, big-picture strategies and system alignment.

With the Governor, General Assembly, state agencies and their regional and local partners working together systematically to identify, finance, re-allocate and align resources and strategies in support of job creation and workforce development, Connecticut can recover and build a stronger future.

The Campaign recommends that the Governor and legislature make the following strategic investments:

**1. Meet the needs of Connecticut employers for the talented workforce required to grow their businesses and drive state economic expansion.**

- ***Support industry-sector and workplace-based learning strategies.*** Connecticut has numerous examples of effective industry-sector and workplace-based training initiatives, funded by public and private resources, and coordinated among workforce investment boards, community colleges, adult literacy providers, business associations and other key stakeholders. These initiatives align training with skill competency demands, standards and certifications, particularly in health care, construction, technology, energy and manufacturing. **The state should invest \$2,000,000 in the 2012 fiscal year and aggressively pursue federal grants to expand these employer-led efforts.**
- ***Increase state support for incumbent worker training.*** Incumbent worker training resources help to meet the near-term workforce needs of employers by upgrading the skills of current employees to be able to perform new tasks and increase their productivity. Matched by participating employers, these resources are an important investment in helping to retain businesses and jobs. Currently only \$500,000 in state resources is dedicated to incumbent worker training. **The Governor must make this investment strategy a priority in his job creation efforts by calling for an additional \$5,000,000 in the next fiscal year.** Incumbent worker training funds should be linked to the award of nationally recognized industry credentials and career advancement opportunities whenever possible.
- ***Build the future workforce pipeline.*** Thousands of Connecticut's youth, ages 14-24, have had opportunities for work experience combined with academic help through the state's youth employment program. As a result, school retention and graduation rates have improved for those who participate in these programs. **The Governor and legislature should ensure that young people have opportunities to learn and work in Connecticut's businesses by increasing the state investment from \$3,500,000 to \$5,000,000 in this and the future fiscal years.** In addition, the youth employment program must be linked to year-round career pathways activities that support students' career education and exploration.

- ***Support the employment of long term unemployed individuals.*** The economic recession has dramatically increased the number of Connecticut workers who are experiencing long term unemployment. Expected to reach 74,000 families in Connecticut by December, short-term education and training initiatives must be created to support their re-entry into the workforce. **The state should invest \$1,500,000 in the next fiscal year to match these talented individuals with employers and support their ability to create their own jobs with entrepreneurial training and resources.** In addition, state agencies and their partners should immediately begin preparation for implementation of the President's American Jobs Act, in whole or part, to assist the long-term unemployed particularly in the manufacturing and construction industries.
- 2. Support adults who want and need to pursue education and training to get the skills needed to increase their value to employers and improve their career advancement opportunities.**
- ***Invest in adult literacy programs to provide more individuals with the foundation and technical skills needed by Connecticut's employers.*** Over 500,000 Connecticut residents – both with and without high school diplomas – lack the basic skills needed to secure productive employment and/or pursue higher education. Evidence suggests that contextualized learning which combines adult literacy instruction with technical training, especially leading to industry-certification, improves the skills of individuals and makes them more marketable to employers. Each Workforce Investment Board in the state has developed a plan for addressing adult literacy in their area in collaboration with their community colleges and adult education providers. **The state should invest \$5,000,000 in the next fiscal year to support these regional plans.** This investment will expand educational opportunities for those who are not yet prepared for college level work and need developmental education support.
  - ***Provide paid work experience to build employability of low-skilled adults.*** Offering paid work experience combined with education and training for individuals without substantial work experience can help them build skills and their resume. These individuals who might be public assistance recipients, ex-offenders, veterans, youth, etc. benefit from the chance to learn and work simultaneously, particularly through contextualized learning opportunities. **The state should allocate \$1,500,000 in the next fiscal year to support this goal.** This program should be combined with a variety of support services including transportation assistance through the Transportation to Work program, case management through the One Stop Career Centers and childcare assistance through the Care for Kids program. Resources for these services are critical to the success of any workforce development program.
  - ***Expand state financial aid rules to support student and business needs.*** Community colleges are seeing record enrollments and high demand for financial assistance to pursue education. In addition, employers are saying that in many instances they can't find the employees with the technical skills needed for their entry and advanced positions. **An additional \$1,000,000 in state financial aid should be provided to encourage enrollment in non-degree technical courses with a direct connection to targeted occupational openings in areas such as health care and manufacturing that lead to industry-recognized credentials.**

## Conclusion

Connecticut's leaders must invest strategically in programs that support employers and current and future workers. The Campaign for a Working CT stands ready to work with the Governor, his administration and the General Assembly in a practical way to set forth this vision and make its implementation a reality.

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**Campaign Mission:**

The Campaign shares an aligned vision: to promote the state's economic competitiveness through the development of sustainable, effective workforce solutions to increase workers' skills and advance families to self-sufficiency. The Campaign works to accomplish this goal through a unique and diverse state-wide coalition, which includes employers, education and training providers, workforce investment boards, advocates and chambers of commerce.

**Campaign Supporters (updated 1-9-12):**

1. 1199 Training and Upgrading Fund
2. Access Community Action Agency
3. Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition
4. Capital Workforce Partners
5. Career Resources, Inc.
6. Center for Latino Progress--CPRF
7. Chamber of Commerce, Central Connecticut
8. Chamber of Commerce, Danbury
9. Chamber of Commerce, East Hartford
10. Chamber of Commerce, Eastern CT
11. Chamber of Commerce, Glastonbury
12. Chamber of Commerce, Greater Mystic
13. Chamber of Commerce, Greater Norwich Area
14. Chamber of Commerce, Middlesex
15. Chamber of Commerce, Northeastern CT
16. Chamber of Commerce, Northwest CT
17. Chamber of Commerce, Windham Region
18. Charter Oak State College
19. Christian Community Action
20. CT AFL-CIO
21. CT Alliance for Basic Human Needs
22. CT Association for Adult and Continuing Education
23. CT Association for Human Services
24. CT Coalition to End Homelessness
25. CT Voices for Children
26. CT Women's Education and Legal Fund
27. CT Workforce Development Council
28. EASTCONN
29. Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board
30. Finishing Trades Institute of Southern New England, Inc.
31. Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc.
32. Greater Hartford Legal Aid
33. Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT
34. Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford
35. National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter
36. Naugatuck Valley Project
37. New Haven Legal Assistance
38. Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board
39. Norwich Human Services
40. OIC of New London County, Inc.
41. Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
42. St. Luke's LifeWorks
43. Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA)
44. United Community and Family Services
45. United Way of Meriden and Wallingford
46. United Way of Northwest Connecticut
47. Windham Regional Community Council, Inc.
48. Workforce Alliance
49. Workplace, Inc.
50. YWCA Hartford Region
51. YWCA New Britain

*For more information about the Campaign, and to access a copy of this Legislative Agenda and the Endorsement Form, please visit our website at: <http://www.campaignct.org/>*

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