



February 8, 2010

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
United States Representative
2413 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman DeLauro:

I am writing this letter of support on behalf of the Manufacturing Technology Program at Emmett O'Brien Technical High School in Ansonia. As a Business Services Specialist for the Connecticut Department of Labor, I manage business relations and workforce development efforts in the Southwest Connecticut region. I work directly with business leaders, primarily in manufacturing, biomedical, and high tech sectors that offer livable wages and career opportunities for many of our residents.

A primary concern of my customers is their skilled but aging workforce and the need for well-trained future workers, able to adapt to the many demands of the modern manufacturing environment. Connecticut's manufacturing scene is changing and evolving. While experiencing record levels of trade-related layoffs, we are seeing gains in more advanced manufacturing jobs requiring more critical thinking skills, math and computer knowledge, and the ability to handle multiple tasks. Many of our future career opportunities will be with companies focused on research and development, science and math ability, high levels of reliability and precision workmanship including aerospace, defense, biomedical equipment, pharmaceutical research, nanotechnology and alternative energy.

While Connecticut's industries are focused on identifying new opportunities in the global economy, modernizing facilities and investing in costly technology transfer, we too must invest in providing these bright students with the tools they'll need for future success. Providing people with training in the skills that are in demand is the key to economic self-sufficiency.

The Manufacturing Technology Program at Emmett O'Brien is experiencing a renewed interest among students who are excited about the hands-on challenge and good paying jobs modern manufacturing offers. However, in order for the instructors to succeed in their mission to fully prepare these future machinists, technicians, mechanics and others for the workforce, students must have access to the most modern equipment, tooling and techniques possible. Unlike many other vocational trades in the technical schools such as plumbing, electrical and hairdressing, manufacturing technology evolves at a much more rapid pace to keep up with technology. Many of Connecticut's modern electronics, defense, aerospace and metal machine facilities have sophisticated multiple-axis CNC machinery, laser technology and CAD programs. We will need skilled workers, familiar with this equipment, to fill those jobs. Over 1500 Connecticut workplaces currently employ CNC operators and machinists and that number is growing. Even in this depressed economy, we have over 80 job openings posted on the DOL's State job bank for these positions. That number is forecasted to grow significantly as more and more boomers retire. Business leaders are understandably concerned about where they'll find future workers.

I commend you for your continual efforts in keeping manufacturing a vital part of our state's economy, and for your dedication to our technical high school system. Any funding to help the school obtain new and modern equipment will be greatly appreciated and have a far-reaching impact to the students, the school and the employers within the region. Thank you in advance for any help that you can provide for this wonderful and viable program.

Sincerely,

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