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Creation of a Manufacturing Career Pathway

House Bill 13-1165

Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
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My name is Frank Waterous, and I am a senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center. The Bell is a non-partisan, non-profit research and policy organization founded on progressive values and dedicated to expanding opportunity for all Coloradans.

The Bell Policy Center supports House Bill 13-1165. The manufacturing career pathway created by the bill is consistent with proven strategies used in other states, grounded in best practices identified in the literature and responsive to the recommendations of leading national and local organizations. It is good education policy, good workforce development policy and good economic development policy.

Career pathways offer a clear sequence of coursework, credentials and support services aligned with the requirements for advancement in an industry. When well designed, they include regular engagement with employers in the target industry and coordinate the efforts of multiple education and training providers. They assist students to acquire qualifications ranging from basic work readiness to advanced-level skills. In their broadest and best form, career pathways serve youth, low-skilled and low-income adults, unemployed or underemployed job seekers and workers already employed in the industry.¹ As the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways notes, the career pathway approach “is not simply a new model; it is a new way of doing business.”²

The manufacturing-sector career pathway proposed in HB 13-1165 contains each of the key elements of effective career pathways identified in the literature. These include:

- Industry-sector-based strategies and partnerships that address workforce needs
- “Stackable” education and training offerings that build from one level to the next
- Contextualized learning
- Accelerated/integrated education and training
- Industry-recognized and/or post-secondary credentials
- Multiple entry and exit points
- Intensive support services such as academic and career counseling for participants
- Scheduling and program design that accommodate working learners³

Overall, the career pathway created through the bill is responsive to the recommendations of leading national and local organizations, including the Working Poor Families Project, the National Skills Coalition, the Alliance for Quality Career Pathways, the Joyce Foundation, Jobs For The Future, the National Commission on Adult Literacy and the Skills2Compete-Colorado campaign, of which the Bell is a member.⁴

The bill is good education policy. Economists estimate that by the year 2018, fully two-thirds of Colorado's workforce will need some level of post-secondary education.⁵ And as the Working Poor Families Project notes, post-secondary education is increasingly important in order for individuals to earn family-supporting wages.⁶ The career pathway created through this bill will help more Colorado students – traditional-age and non-traditional working adults, including low-income and low-skill workers – acquire the marketable skills and post-secondary credentials needed for success.

The bill is good workforce development policy. The career pathway created under HB 13-1165 will help Colorado employers fill the critically needed skilled positions that are the foundation for business productivity and growth. The research is clear that, when used as part of a sector-based partnership strategy, career pathways can:

- Address current and emerging skill gaps, such as Colorado's "middle skill" gap between the number of jobs available that require some post-secondary education beyond high school but less than a four-year bachelor's degree and the number of workers with the skills and training to fill those jobs.
- Provide a means to engage directly with industry across traditional boundaries.
- Better align state programs and resources serving employers and workers.⁷

The bill is good economic development policy. A well-articulated manufacturing career pathway will support Colorado's efforts to boost our economy, strengthen our competitiveness and further improve our quality of life. As the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation notes, "Educational attainment is the single-most important element in job and income growth" and is one of the chief underpinnings of a strong economy.⁸

There is one additional observation that we at the Bell would like to make. It is this: The career pathway and sector partnership approach works best when it is broadly applied as a state strategy across a range of high-growth industries, not just in one. It is our understanding that Colorado's community college system intends to use the manufacturing career pathway proposed in this bill as a model for future expansion of similar efforts in other industries important to Colorado's economy, and we would encourage such an approach.

In closing, **the Bell Policy Center believes that House Bill 13-1165 is a key step forward in providing marketable education and skills training for current and future workers, helping Colorado employers grow their businesses by meeting their workforce needs and strengthening our state's economic competitiveness.** We thank Senator Heath for bringing the bill to you today, we urge you to support it, and we thank you for the opportunity to share this information. If you have any questions, or if I can provide further information, please call me at 303-297-0456 or email me at waterous@bellpolicy.org.

Endnotes

¹ *State Sector Strategies Coming of Age: Implications for State Workforce Policymakers*, the National Skills Coalition in partnership with the National Governor's Association and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, January 2013, http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/state_sector_strategies_coming_of_age.pdf and *The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Approach: Developing Criteria and Metrics for Quality Career Pathways, A Working Paper*, Center for Law and Social Policy, February 2013, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/CLASP-The-AQCP-Approach-Feb-2013.pdf>

² The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Working Paper.

³ Ibid; Clagett, Mary Gardner and Ray Uhalde, *The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change, Jobs For The Future*, June 2012, http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/CareerPathways_JFF_Paper_060112.pdf; *Funding Career Pathways and Career Pathway Bridges: A Federal Policy Toolkit for States*, Center for Law and Social Policy, Revised Edition, October 2010, <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/FundingCareerPathwaysFederalPolicyToolkitforStates.pdf>.

⁴ Duke, Amy-Ellen and Evelyn Ganzglass, *Strengthening State Adult Education Policies for Low-Skilled Workers*, The Working Poor Families Project, Summer 2007, http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/pdfs/PB_adult_education.pdf; *State Sector Strategies Coming of Age*; The Alliance for Quality Career Pathways Working Paper; Roberts, Brandon and Derek Price, *Strengthening State Systems for Adult Learners: An Evaluation of the First Five Years of Shifting Gears*, The Joyce Foundation, December 2012, http://www.joycefdn.org/assets/1/7/SG_Strengthening_State_Systems_Report_-_final.pdf; *The Promise of Career Pathways Systems Change*; Strawn, Julie, *Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment*, prepared for the National Commission on Adult Literacy, Sept 28, 2007 (rev. 10/18/07), <http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org/content/strawnbriefrev101807.pdf.pdf>; and *Preparing for the Future: Closing Colorado's Middle-Skill Gap*, Skills2Compete-Colorado campaign, Oct 2011, <http://bellpolicy.org/sites/default/files/ClosingColoradosMiddleSkillsJobsGap.pdf>. The Bell Policy Center is a member of the Skills2Compete-Colorado campaign coalition.

⁵ Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith and Jeff Strohl, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2010, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/State-LevelAnalysis-web.pdf>.

⁶ Hilliard, Tom, *Graduating to College: Three States Helping Adult Education Students Get a College Education*, The Working Poor Families Project, Policy Brief Summer 2012, http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/policybrief-summer2012_2.pdf. The Bell Policy Center is the Working Poor Families Project's Colorado state partner in its efforts to better prepare America's working families for a more secure economic future.

⁷ *State Sector Strategies Coming of Age and Colorado's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: Meeting the Demands of a 21st-Century Economy*, National Skills Coalition, written for the Skills2Compete-Colorado campaign, October 2011, <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/assets/reports-/s2c-colorado-report-2011.pdf>.

⁸ *Toward a More Competitive Colorado: Executive Summary on Competitiveness*, Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation, Nov 2009, http://www.metrodenver.org/files/documents/news-center/research-reports/TMCC_V_ExecSumm.pdf

