

JOHN B. LARSON

FIRST DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE

DEMOCRATIC STEERING COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0701

January 30, 2014

WASHINGTON OFFICE

350 CONGRESS HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
202-225-2265
202-225-1001 FAX

DISTRICT OFFICE

201 MAIN STREET SECOND FLOOR
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT 06106
860-274-8688
860-274-2111 FAX

INTERNET ADDRESS

http://www.house.gov/jb-larson
TOLL-FREE NUMBER (IN STATE ONLY):
800-276-6724

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Biden,

Like most of my colleagues in the House Democratic Caucus, I thought the President's State of the Union did an excellent job laying out a vision to keep our economy moving in the right direction and investing in our future. In particular, I was very excited to hear that you would be leading a review of our nation's job training programs. As you know, these programs have seen reductions over the past few years, and the Republican majority in the House has been pushing for even more cuts in these vital programs, at exactly the time they are needed the most. While increased investments are needed, it is also crucial that we look to our existing programs to ensure they are moving unemployed or underemployed Americans into careers and leveraging partnerships with the private, non-profit, and academic sectors to provide as many opportunities as possible for individuals to get the training they need. In my hometown, we have been engaged in that effort for several years now, and I would like to invite you to East Hartford to witness it firsthand as you conduct your review and develop an action plan to reforming job training programs.

As you know, Connecticut has a rich history as a manufacturing state – as we like to say, manufacturing is in our DNA. Although in recent years we have experienced a decline in the amount of manufacturing work like many other states, we still have a robust manufacturing sector: from the large defense companies like Pratt & Whitney and Electric Boat, to the hundreds of small shops that are spread out across the state; thousands of Connecticut residents are employed in manufacturing positions. However, with an aging workforce and the emergence of high-tech manufacturing techniques that require advanced skill-sets, we are currently experiencing a shortage of labor that will only be exacerbated in the coming decade. This is a problem that has been recognized by state leaders, business leaders, academic institutions, and union leaders alike.

In Connecticut, we were able to bring all of these partners together to build an exciting program (all without any federal dollars) that I believe can serve as a model for the rest of the nation. The premise is simple: building a partnership to ensure a pipeline of skilled and credentialed workers to address the current and future employment needs of our state's manufacturing sector. This partnership has brought together an innovative local academic institution Goodwin College; one of the largest employers in the state in Pratt & Whitney; the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology, and the International Association of Machinists. All have a strong track record of finding ways of providing unique training opportunities, however, never have they all come together to partner on an initiative.

The program, launched at Goodwin College in East Hartford in May of 2013, is called the "Certified Production Technician (CPT) program," and is designed to provide credentials to students based on industry-defined, nationally validated standards through a hybrid curriculum program of courses both in the classroom and through interactive virtual simulation comprised of four modules including: safety, quality practices and measurement, manufacturing process and production and maintenance awareness. The first pilot class of eight students just graduated this month and Pratt Whitney has announced that they will be donating \$125,000 to the program. This is just the start, as I believe that this program can serve as a vehicle to training the next generation of skilled manufacturing workers in Connecticut.

Goodwin College is a private, non-profit college, focused entirely on providing job opportunities to its graduates. Goodwin is truly unique and remarkable in its focus on working with the local business community to understand their current and future employment needs and tailoring the programs offered by the college to those opportunities. If a particular program is not resulting in the vast majority of its graduates obtaining employment, it is eliminated and replaced with another that addresses an employment gap. Goodwin also tailors its programming to non-traditional students, by providing supports on-campus and holding classes on nights and weekends.

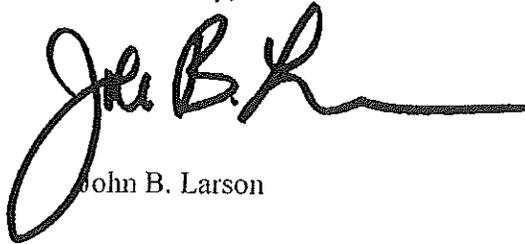
It is also important to point out the longstanding commitment that Pratt & Whitney's parent company, United Technologies, has had to providing educational opportunities to their employees. For more than 15 years the company has invested more than \$1 billion in their employees through the Employer Scholar Program. This program covers not just tuition, but pays for books, paid leave time to study, and does not restrict the courses that employees are allowed to take. Over 30,000 employees have earned degrees as a result of this model program.

At both the launch of the program and the graduation ceremony recently, all of the partners in this effort were present to underscore their support for this initiative. As you know, bringing together labor, business, and academic leaders is not an easy task, but the group in Connecticut has come together for the common goal of shoring up the manufacturing base in our state for now and years to come. It would be an honor to have you visit our state to witness this

successful collaboration firsthand as you look for best practices in reforming federal training programs.

I have included a packet of background materials as well as a video that describes the program. I hope that you will be able to find time in your schedule to come to Connecticut and please do not hesitate to contact me directly or your staff can contact Lee Slater in my office if they need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. Larson". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John B. Larson