



The Bell Policy Center

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Creation of Career Pathways for Students

House Bill 15-1274

Testimony to the House Business Affairs and Labor 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 strongly supports House Bill 15-1274. The bill requires the creation of integrated career pathways for critical industries in Colorado modeled on the manufacturing career pathway authorized by HB 13-1165, which the Bell also strongly supported. This multiple-industry pathways approach 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, workforce and economic-development policy.

In our 2013 testimony supporting the manufacturing career pathway bill,¹ we noted that 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. We urged Colorado to follow such an approach, using the manufacturing pathway as a model. **HB 15-1274 is directly responsive to that recommendation, and we are very enthusiastic about the outcomes that it will enable.**

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.²

The career pathways called for in this bill are 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.³

Simply put, the Bell believes that HB 15-1274 is good education policy, good workforce-development policy and good economic-development policy.

- **It is good education policy** because the career pathways it requires 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 in a variety of key industries.
- **It is good workforce development policy** because these career pathways will help Colorado employers fill the critically needed skilled positions that are the foundation for business productivity and growth.
- **It is good economic development policy** because, 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.⁴

In closing, HB 15-1274 is a key step forward in providing marketable education and skills training for current and future workers, helping Colorado employers in multiple industries grow their businesses by meeting their workforce needs and strengthening our state’s economic competitiveness. The Bell Policy Center strongly supports HB 15-1274. We thank Representatives Garnett and Melton for bringing it to you today and we urge you to support the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony with you. 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 Waterous, Frank, “Creation of a Manufacturing Career Pathway, House Bill 13-1165,” The Bell Policy Center, Testimony to the Senate Education Committee, April 25, 2013,

<https://bellpolicy.org/content/hb13-1165-creation-manufacturing-career-pathway-senate-education-committee>

² *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>

³ 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.

⁴ *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