



**Testimony before the Massachusetts General Court
Joint Committee on Education
Public hearing on Bills Related to Accountability, College & Career Readiness, Extra-Curricular &
Miscellaneous
North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce
Christopher McDermott- Public Affairs Manager
Friday, May 31, 2019**

Measure: H.567

Title: An Act Expanding High School Student Access to earn Industry Recognized Credentials

Description:

A petition by Rep. Roy and others relative to the development of programs to assist students in obtaining industry-recognized certifications while attending high school.

Position:

The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce requests that the Joint Committee moves to support this legislation and recommend its passage and approval by the House and Senate.

Comments:

The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce is a regional business organization that represents roughly 1000 employers across 17 communities immediately south of New Hampshire. This region is home to the largest manufacturing cluster in the Commonwealth, an industry that consists of over 440 firms, employs a quarter of the region's workforce, and accounts for a third of its total private payroll. It is for this reason that we have chosen to write the Joint Committee on the above mentioned legislation.

We hear repeatedly from our employers that finding, training, and retaining qualified and skilled workers are among their top challenges. This is particularly true of employers in the manufacturing sector, which struggles to address an aging workforce and negative false perceptions of what careers within it entail. With this in mind, the Chamber convened a taskforce of employers and educators and worked to identify solutions. The result was *Build North Central*, a report released earlier this year with recommendations for school systems and policy makers alike. Amongst the recommendations identified therein was the establishment of industry credentialing programs within the state's general curriculum.

Programming of this type would expose students to valuable training opportunities and create a new pool of potential employees whose skills had been vetted against pre-established standards trusted by employers. As such, it would benefit students, who would leave high school with valuable and verified industry-recognized skills. Credentialing would also benefit those seeking these skills out, as it would

immediately signify the applicant's knowledge level and allow employers to avoid expensive, duplicative on-site trainings. Representative Roy's proposal aligns directly with this recommendation, which is why we ask that you report House Bill 567 favorably and encourage your colleagues in the House and Senate to vote for its passage.

We appreciate your consideration of our views on this important issue. As you debate the school funding formula, we ask that you keep our recommendations in mind and act to implement education reforms that prepare our youth to succeed and our state to excel in today's competitive environment.