



Chair, Roger Williams and House Committee on Small Business Members:

## **2/24/26 Hearing on – “Career & Technical Education (CTE): Developing the Future of Main Street Success”**

**Introduction** - My name is Mike Gibson, Executive Vice President for Associated General Contractors (AGC) Kansas, which is recognized as the “**Chamber of Commerce for the Kansas Construction Industry**” and AGC represents 300 Kansas union/non-union construction firms and their 20,000 employees. AGC of Kansas is a chartered association member of AGC of America which is the largest construction trade association in the U.S.

**Purpose of this Testimony** - I am appearing before you today to share with you the many successes and best practices delivered by AGC’s Build Up Kansas workforce development program. This public-private-partnership between the State of Kansas, Kansas Educators and the Construction Industry have a laser focus mission to bring back Career & Technical Education (CTE) in all Kansas high schools, community colleges and vo-tech colleges.

**History** - For a historical perspective, 40 years ago there were directives to education to prepare all students to attend college. These directives shifted the lion share of federal/state/local resources to college prep initiatives. As a result, the country saw a systematic dismantling of technical trade (shop classes) in most of the high schools/community colleges across the country. Over the last decade it has been realized that the lion share of high school students, either can’t afford to attend college and/or are not interested in college.

**So, what do students, not going to college have to fall back on?**

In Kansas, there is major focus on bringing back Career & Technology Education (CTE) programs in all high schools/community colleges/vo-tech colleges. This effort is to provide life skills and industry recognized credentials to students to be eligible for employment into professional careers in the construction industry and other Kansas industries (i.e. agriculture, manufacturing, aviation, energy, healthcare and many other professions). These efforts are now giving rural and urban students hope that obtaining life skills with technical training will give them opportunities to be employed in the region they grew up in and remain in their home state.



## **CTE Programs are a TOP Priority in Kansas - How is Kansas making CTE programs a priority in Kansas high schools, community colleges and vo-tech colleges?**

Five years ago, Panasonic Corporation was seeking to relocate their \$ 5 billion battery plant from California to another state. Panasonic narrowed down their search to Tulsa Oklahoma and DeSoto Kansas.

**The #1 Question that Panasonic asked Kansas Policymakers and the Kansas Department of Commerce, in choosing Kansas to invest \$ 5 billion dollars into building their battery plant was – “CAN YOU BUILD AND CAN YOU MAINTAIN OUR FACILITY”.**

Panasonic’s Question to Kansas policymakers prompted these policymakers to turn to AGC of Kansas to form public-private-partnership. This partnership included supplemental funding from the State of Kansas to accelerate AGC’s Build Up Kansas workforce development efforts.

## **Build Up Kansas Leads the Way on CTE Programs**

In less than three (3) years, AGC of Kansas’ Build Up Kansas has become the largest workforce development program not only in Kansas but also in the mid-west. Build Up Kansas has launched the following CTE programs, that include options for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programming:

### **RESULTS**

- 150+ High Schools, Community Colleges and Vo-Tech Colleges.
- 10,000+ students enrolled into CTE/Vocational NCCER Trade programs:
  - **Carpentry**
  - **Welding**
  - **Electrical**
  - **HVAC**
  - **Sheetmetal**
  - **Plumbing**
  - **Core**
- **21% of the students are women.**
- 300+ certified instructors teaching these CTE programs.
- Over 100,000+ industry recognized credentials issued per year.



Build Up Kansas has partnered with the **National Center for Education & Research** in the use of NCCER construction trade training materials. NCCER, based in Alachua, Florida – [www.nccer.org](http://www.nccer.org), is the largest utilized trade materials in the public-school systems (nearly 4,000 U.S. educational institutions).

**State Funding for Build Up Kansas pays for:**

- **NCCER Textbooks & Virtual Materials for the students (NCCER Connect)**
- **NCCER Train the Trainer for the Instructor Certifications.**
- **NCCER on-line Testing for Student Credentials.**

**NCCER CTE materials are approved by:**

- **U.S. Dept of Labor**
- **U.S. Dept of Education**
- **U.S. Dept of Justice**
- **Kansas Board of Regents** (oversee the Kansas University/Community Colleges)
- **Kansas Dept of Education**
  - **Note – AGC of Kansas is the #4 user in the U.S. of NCCER materials.**

**Connecting the CTE Students to Professional Careers in the Industry via Social Media -** Build Up Kansas has incorporated a Human Resource Platform (powered by Arcoro, equivalent to Indeed, Glass Door) and provides this HR Platform to the industry to post their job openings by craft and by city across Kansas/Region. Build Up Kansas utilizes social media to **“geo-fence”** all partnering schools and showcases this HR Platform to CTE Students for opportunities for the CTE students to download their resumes and send these resumes directly to the HR Director that posted the job opening for a job interview.

**How CTE Programs Play a Critical Role in Supporting U.S. Economic Development Efforts** – CTE programs, provide valuable career paths for students for the younger generation to obtain an industry recognized credential in seeking employment opportunities in their local communities. CTE programs energize a pipeline of skilled workers to support this country’s economic development efforts. In fact, AGC of Kansas refers to CTE Instructors as **“economic developers”**, because without CTE instructors we don’t have skilled workers to support business and industry.



## **Recommendations for Congressional Consideration on CTE programs.**

AGC of Kansas would recommend the following:

- **Increase funding for Carl Perkins Grants**
- Recommendation to the Administration:
  - Establish a **“CTE Czar” within the Dept of Labor**
    - Serve as the point person for business/industry and education on CTE issues and resources from the federal government.
- **Establish Matching Federal Funding as incentives to States to implement CTE program:**
  - States that invest in CTE Programming would have opportunities to have Federal Matching Funds to accelerate valuable CTE programs.
    - Similar to the state incentives for Highway Transportation Funding.
- **Congressional Directives to have the Department of Labor and Department of Education work with trade associations:** State/Federal agencies should partner with trade associations in forming public-private-partnerships on CTE programs. Trade Associations have a wide range of relationships with state/local policymakers, state/local agencies, educators and their respective industry members can bring immediate solutions to their community’s workforce development needs and solutions to addressing workforce shortages.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Kansas and its Build Up Kansas Workforce Development program and the State of Kansas, thank you for your tireless dedication and leadership to this great nation and to your respective states. It is much appreciated.

Mike Gibson

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