



Testimony of Michael Nogelo

President & CEO, Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)

Before the Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

Public Hearing on the Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP)

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Michael Nogelo, and I am the President and CEO of the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the proposed funding reduction for the Connecticut Youth Employment Program (CYEP).

The CYEP is a critical initiative that provides meaningful employment and internship opportunities to Connecticut's at-risk and disconnected youth. I am here to urge you to, at a minimum, restore funding to its current \$10 million level and, ideally, increase investment in this vital program.

The proposed 50% reduction – from \$10 million to \$5 million, due to the exhaustion of ARPA funds – would severely limit access to this proven program at a time when we can least afford it. Last summer, the CYEP served youth from 37 of the 41 towns in EWIB's service area, with 90% of participants successfully completing the work experience component. A funding cut of this magnitude would disproportionately harm youth in underserved communities who rely on the CYEP as a first opportunity to build a resume, develop interviewing skills, gain work experience, and, in many cases, earn a paycheck that contributes to their family's financial stability.

Beyond the direct benefits to participants, the CYEP is an investment in Connecticut's future workforce. The 119K Commission on At-Risk and Disconnected Youth, in its final report, "Young People First," explicitly recommended that the state partner with Workforce Development Boards to secure full funding for the CYEP, ensuring access for all young people. Notably, the 119K Commission was a bipartisan body, composed of Republicans and Democrats from large cities and small towns alike, illustrating widespread agreement on the urgent need to address Connecticut's disconnected youth crisis.

Moreover, research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of youth employment programs. National evaluations have shown that summer youth employment initiatives reduce involvement in the criminal justice system, enhance social-emotional skills, strengthen academic and career aspirations, and instill work habits that serve young people throughout their lives. Here in Connecticut, the CYEP represents a tangible solution to two of our most pressing challenges: youth disconnection and the statewide labor shortage. As older workers continue to retire, we must cultivate a workforce pipeline that ensures young people already living in our communities have the skills and experience to step into those roles.

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Finally, I want to be clear: my testimony today is not about protecting a source of funding for EWIB. Since 2018, EWIB has administered and overseen the CYEP in Eastern Connecticut without retaining any portion of its allocation for administrative costs or staffing. Our commitment is solely to the young people who benefit from this program and to the employers who rely on its pipeline of talent.

I urge this committee to recognize the CYEP not as an expendable line item, but as an essential investment in Connecticut's future. I ask you to restore – and ideally increase – funding to ensure that at-risk and disconnected youth across our state continue to have access to the opportunities that will shape their futures and strengthen our economy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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