



A CONNECTICUT RESOLUTION FOR WIND

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion often get talked about as high-minded principles. They're presented as things we ideally should be doing or as a goal, we're trying to achieve. However, our society's workforce is evolving rapidly as we embrace a climate economy where clean energy and clean technologies drive economic growth and job creation. As this new economy emerges, it will create tens of thousands of new jobs, and business success will hinge on tapping into the totality of a state's workforce.

The work we're going to be doing moving forward will involve decarbonizing everything we do, everything we make, and everything we consume. As a state, we must ensure our students are prepared for these emerging jobs. The climate economy requires a skilled workforce from engineers to technicians to encompass solar, wind, clean hydrogen, fuel cells, energy efficiency, transportation, and more. And that demand for talent necessitates diversity, equity, and inclusion to become core skills in workforce development rather than fond aspirations.

Last year, the legislature passed House Bill 6354, An Act Establishing a Green Jobs Corps Program. The goal was clear: to put Connecticut residents to work in the growing clean energy sector, filling critical workforce gaps in solar installation, building weatherization, energy auditing, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning maintenance. There are already more than 45,000 of these jobs in the state, and we're still in the early stages of energy transition.

The act entrusts the Connecticut Clean Economy Council, established by Governor Lamont, to create a roadmap for green workforce development. This spring, they will deliver a report outlining their plan to the legislature's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. This plan will encompass:

1. Regional cluster strategies on the clean energy industries with the highest potential to add jobs and increase prosperity in regions across Connecticut.
2. Strategies to bring together public and private sectors to build on their unique strengths.
3. Plans to address barriers to successful training and employment.
4. Developing certificate and degree programs in green technology at technical education and higher education institutions.
5. Identifying public or private funding sources for these programs.
6. Crafting strategies for recruiting individuals, especially those from underrepresented populations.

Unfortunately, transparency around the Clean Energy Economy Council and its processes remains limited, and there is concern that too insular a function will cause us to repeat past mistakes rather than correct them. Collaboration with higher education, technical education, industry representatives, training programs, labor unions, and nonprofits offering support services is essential to collecting the necessary information for their report. Connecticut urgently needs an actionable plan, not just another superficial report.

Ideally, the report will provide concrete recommendations with timelines and potential funding sources. Aligning job pathways and training programs with industry demand is paramount. To ensure success, the Council should identify the players within clean energy career pathways, assess regional employer needs, create a plan to address workforce training gaps and offer a comprehensive resource for residents seeking clean energy careers.

We need this to result in projects and paychecks in cities like Bridgeport and towns like Killingly. Because decarbonization

needs to occur everywhere in the state, we need to activate the potential workforce around the state.

Critical questions the report should answer include:

- What is the pathway from high school to a specific clean energy job in Connecticut? (While organizations like the International Renewable Energy Council [IREC] have identified general ways to clean energy careers, the report should determine how Connecticut organizations fit into those pathways.)
- How can regional hubs unite new and existing workforce development programs, employers, K-12 education systems, community colleges, and nonprofit service providers? How would they be facilitated, and what is the incentive for participating?
- How can training programs and state funding ensure equitable access to job opportunities, prioritizing underrepresented communities?
- What policies can the state legislature pursue to promote a well-developed clean energy workforce?

How can legislators incorporate workforce development into clean energy legislation?

Extensive research on best practices for workforce development exists, and it is now time for Connecticut to devise an implementation plan. Under Public Act 23-61, that plan should come from the Connecticut Clean Economy Council. We need the untapped potential of this state to be unleashed.

Success lies in collaboration. A unified effort from stakeholders, educators, and policymakers is imperative for Connecticut's clean energy workforce development ecosystem to thrive.

Connecticut's future workforce is a diverse clean energy workforce, and we must prepare accordingly with a joint sense of urgency. Our future prosperity is riding on how well we do this.

A Better Connecticut Institute (ABCI) is an independent, non-profit organization researching social and economic inequalities in Connecticut to inform the development of policies that will create a better Connecticut for all residents.

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