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Thank you, members of the Committee.

My name is Chaer Robert, and I am coordinator of the [Skills to Compete – Colorado](#) Coalition. Skills2Compete Colorado is a multi-sector policy advocacy coalition focused on greater access to education and training opportunities which ultimately lead to middle skilled jobs. We are the state affiliate of the National Skills Coalition.

Our Coalition strongly supports SB22-140 – Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities.

Here's four reasons we like SB140:

1. Digital literacy has moved from important to essential since the pandemic hit. We have been working with the Colorado Department of Labor Future of Work Office and the Digital Inclusion Committee, which works with the Broadband Office on the [human side of digital access](#). Through use of people from their own communities, the community digital navigator concept helps people who are having difficulty in the transition to digital interaction for many functions of daily life including finding and applying for jobs, and acquiring the basic digital skills needed for many other facets of life.
2. This bill creates a virtual career-aligned English as a second language program. In the months before the pandemic hit in March 2020, one of our priority issues was English language instruction on the job. While many workers who have not yet mastered the English language were some of our key essential workers during the pandemic and those we rely on for food preparation, keeping office, our airports and hotels clean, building or repairing our homes, providing care to older adults, etc., many find their employment options limited and upward mobility stifled until they have a basic mastery of work-related English. Safety and teamwork are enhanced when all workers can acquire the basics of English as used on the job. While we had been picturing classes at jobsites pre-pandemic, the virtual option has some advantages, if workers have easy access and have basic digital skills.
3. The Global Talent Task Force takes a new approach to helping address worker shortages. It would assess those with educational credentials of occupational experience and licensing from other countries in areas related to Colorado's jobs of highest need. Talented, experienced workers from other countries shouldn't be doomed to lifetime of underemployment, when Colorado could really use the

skills, experience and talents. There should be a pathway to re-employment without starting completely over.

4. We appreciate that the work-based learning opportunities will not exclude adults. Many adults learn better on the job than in the classroom. And if the work-based learning can be paid (which we understand is a component of a quality work-based learning experience, but not required by this bill), then that opportunity is more accessible for an adult who must support themselves and/or their families. Not everyone can afford to go months without a paycheck while they learn additional skills. Creating work-based learning opportunities do require an employer to rethink the job and devote more supervisory time than hiring someone pre-trained by a previous employer. Hence the proposal includes both monetary incentive to employers and “intermediaries” to help the placement succeed.

Please support SB140.

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