

HB21-1264 Funds Workforce Development Increase Worker Skills

Wednesday, May 12 2021

SENATE BUSINESS, LABOR, & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Chair: Sen. Robert Rodriguez

1:30 PM SCR 352

Thank you, Mister Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to provide this testimony today. My name is Laura Rizzo and I am the SVP of external affairs for the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. I am here today on behalf of the Chamber, our 3,000 members and their 400,000 employees, to express our support for House Bill 1264.

Thank you to bill sponsors Rep. Tom Sullivan, Rep. Mary Young, Sen. Chris Kolker and Sen. Dennis Hisey for advancing this important bill and responding to our feedback.

As our economy changes, we know upskilling and next-skilling workers are critical strategies for getting more Coloradans to work in great jobs. Strategic investment in training for unemployed and underemployed workers during times when unemployment is high gets people back to work, connects employers with qualified employees, and prompts economic recovery and reductions in unemployment, which is good for all of us in Colorado.

We know jobs change people's lives and are excited to support this bill that will get more Coloradans back to work. Knowing that our state is unique – and different regions and demographic groups in Colorado face unique challenges, we also think it's critical to look at not only the statewide unemployment rate, but unemployment by geography and workforce development area, which is exactly what this bill does. We ask for your support of HB 1264 as a thoughtful approach to workforce development and training Coloradans for the future of work.

Thank you!

Kelly Folks - Theme: Perspective as RMWDA President and local area representative on the CWDC

- Thank you, Mr. Chair, sponsors Sen. Hisey and Sen. Kolker, and committee members.
- My name is Kelly Folks, and I am the president of the Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association, and I represent the local area workforce directors on the Colorado Workforce Development Council.
- I am here today to support HB21-1264, to increase the skills of workers across Colorado.
- In program year 2019, Colorado's statewide network of workforce centers provided no-cost, in-person services to more than 70,000 job seekers and served more than 9,000 businesses.
- As the Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association President, I am able to hear testimonials from both jobseekers and businesses regarding the assistance they have received from the local workforce centers that has helped them become employed and fill their employment needs.
- I have worked in this realm for over 20 years and I am extremely knowledgeable about the needs of our local communities and I can attest to the fact that the local Workforce Centers are well-positioned to connect job seekers and individuals who are underemployed with the reskilling and upskilling opportunities this funding would provide.
- In my role as the Rocky Mountain Workforce Development Association President, and a member of the Colorado Workforce Development Council, I have the opportunity to see firsthand the already established collaboration and feedback loops between Colorado's local workforce areas and the Colorado Workforce Development Council.
- Elected officials should feel confident that in identifying the Colorado Workforce Development Council as the distributor of funds it will be done equitably across all geographies and counties of the state. By partnering with local workforce areas, we will be able to best serve the specific needs of our local job seekers, businesses, and communities.
- I ask for your support of HB21-1264 today, and I thank you for your time and consideration.