

**Assemblymember Anthony Brindisi (119th AD) - Testimony
before New York State Senate Education Committee, 10/1/13**

I would like to first thank Senator John Flanagan, and all the members of the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Education for traveling to Central New York today to discuss the future of education policy here in our state. I very much appreciate the opportunity to briefly speak to you, and to those attending here today. These hearings are extremely important, as we all work today to prepare our students for a successful future.

Today I'd like to briefly discuss my plan to develop a specialized Career and Technical Diploma—or CTE diploma. First, here's why I believe it is needed.

As I've talked with manufacturers and business owners over the past several years, I've often been told that they have good paying, skilled positions available that they would quickly fill, if they had job applicants with the right skills set. One owner of a manufacturing business told me he could hire an additional five to ten workers immediately if he had qualified applicants.

Today, you can look at help wanted listings and see where the need for workers is: welders, master plumbers, electricians, machinists, manufacturers, computer network specialists...and the list goes on.

At the same time, we still have a significant number of students who don't finish school. I believe one of the ways to help lower the drop-out rate is to offer an alternative career pathway—and that's where the CTE diploma comes in.

A recent National Association of Manufacturers report on the industry reveals that last year, if you include benefits, the average manufacturing worker in the U.S. earned just over \$77,000. Last year, manufacturing contributed about one-point-87 trillion dollars to the economy—that's up from one-point-73 trillion in 2011. And perhaps most interestingly, manufacturers in the U.S. now perform two thirds of all private sector Research and Development in the nation.

Students who may not want to pursue the path to a Regents Diploma deserve the choice to pursue a specialized technical diploma, which they cannot now. This plan would involve continued apprenticeships that start in high school through paid jobs, or that allow students to go on to college to obtain more educational opportunities.

High School Students would continue taking classes they're enrolled in; however the difference is that they would have the option of replacing some of their electives or core classes, and instead take vocational courses, and perhaps earn a vocational certificate. Earning entry-level certification to work on airplanes or to work as a Computer Networking Technician would open the door to a stable, good paying career.

This is a plan that would bring benefits across the state. In the Hudson Valley, there are many opportunities in nanotechnology, biotechnology, and engineering firms. In the Mohawk Valley, Central New York, and Western New York, there are many traditional manufacturers in fields like welding, metal fabricating, electrical contracting and machining. The Capital Region continues to see growth in high-tech manufacturing and nanotechnology. The growing opportunities in technical and manufacturing fields are not confined to one region.

I will be introducing legislation that would put the wheels in motion to develop a CTE Diploma in New York State. There clearly is a need for a new diploma standard that will improve graduation rates, and also help drive our economy forward.

Senator Flanagan and Education Committee members and staff, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to address this very important subject.