

NEW JERSEY

# EMPLOYER COALITION

FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Preparing tomorrow's workforce.

NJ Business & Industry Association  
Contact: Peter Peretzman  
609-858-9502

NJ Council of County Vocational-Technical School  
Contact: Kathryn Forsyth  
973-518-1732

## **NJBIA and County Vocational Schools Launch Coalition to Support Career and Technical Education**

### ***Development of Future Workforce a Key Goal***

TRENTON, NJ—FEBRUARY 20, 2014— Employer and education leaders and Senate President Stephen Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto, today announced a new partnership to help ensure New Jersey's economic prosperity by supporting career and technical education opportunities that address workforce needs and prepare students to successfully hit the ground running in filling jobs that are in demand.

Spearheaded by the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, the NJ Employer Coalition for Technical Education already involves more than 100 members representing small businesses, large companies, labor unions, trade associations, educational institutions and individuals throughout the state.

Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Prieto joined with the coalition at today's event to show their support for employer engagement in career and technical education programs that respond to their needs for future workers with strong technical and work readiness skills.

“Career and technical education meets two critical statewide needs—education reform and economic growth. Today's county vocational-technical schools prepare students for college and careers, offering a rigorous academic experience and the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce” said Sweeney.

“Many of our county vocational-technical schools are among the best high schools in the state. Students engaged in relevant, career focused learning demonstrate high achievement, and their

technical knowledge, work-based experiences, and drive to succeed will help keep the state's economy strong," the Senate President said.

"I've made clear that increasing New Jersey's focus on career and technical education is one of my top priorities, and it's absolutely essential to have employers engaged in this effort," said Prieto. "We must ensure that our young people are properly prepared for the opportunities that await them, and we must expand opportunities for students who do not plan to attend a four-year college or university.

"While many focus on college and do not think about a technical career, we must make it clear that there are also many well-paying careers that can be launched with an industry credential or an associate's degree. As our economy begins to grow again, employers will look to our county vocational-technical schools to meet this need, and we need to make sure our students are ready to go," the Speaker said.

The new coalition seeks to promote quality career and technical education, engage employers with vocational-technical schools and students, and expand county vocational-technical schools and programs.

New Jersey's 21 county-vocational school districts provide career-focused education for more than 32,000 high school students, and over 5,000 adults. They offer more than 540 employer-driven career programs that incorporate work-based learning, industry-recognized credentials, and opportunities to earn college credit. These schools integrate high level academics with career programs that include science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), health science, digital media, hospitality, automotive, and construction technologies and manufacturing.

"We must align our education policies with workforce needs to create a pipeline of qualified young adults with the academic, technical and work readiness skills that employers need," said Philip Kirschner, President, NJBIA.

"We believe that the coalition and its more than 100 members will bring career and technical education to the forefront, encourage the expansion of opportunities for our students and ensure that when our young people graduate from high school they do so with the skills that ensure they will be ready for the workplace," Kirschner said.

The coalition has offered several recommendations including continued state and local support for county vocational-technical school programs; expanding employer partnerships to identify and address critical workforce needs; support for multiple pathways to success, expansion of county vocational-technical schools and programs to meet student and employer demand; new joint ventures between county vocational-technical schools and community colleges to address employer needs, and the creation of career pathway opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults.

"Perceptions of career and technical education programs have changed," said Judy Savage, executive director of the New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools.

“Students, parents and employers recognize that completing a career program along with academic preparation gives students a jump start on college and career success.”

“But at this point, our schools do not have sufficient capacity to meet the increasing demand for these programs, and every year they must turn away students who are seeking a career-focused education. We need to add more seats and more programs to grow New Jersey’s workforce pipeline,” Savage said.

The coalition will encourage employers to engage with career and technical education programs at county vo-tech schools in an effort to have them become involved with program advisory committees, and expand opportunities for internships, mentoring and employment.

For more information or to join, visit the coalition website at <http://www.careertechnj.org/nj-employer-coalition-for-technical-education>.

—End—