

**Steve Day, Principal of Cherry Creek Innovation Campus
and on behalf of the Cherry Creek School District**

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Senate Subcommittee on
Employment & Workplace Safety (March 12, 2024)**

Good afternoon,

Chair Hickenlooper, Ranking Member Braun, and members of the subcommittee, my name is Steve Day and I am the principal of the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus which is part of the Cherry Creek School District, the fourth largest school district in Colorado. It is an honor to be here today and provide support for this critically important legislation.

Senator Hickenlooper, it was a privilege to give you a tour of the Innovation Campus at the start of our school year and to hear firsthand your and Senator Braun's vision for apprenticeships and what that could mean for our communities and for our students.

At the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, known as the CCIC, we have the privilege of working with high school students at a critical time and juncture in their formation as young adults. At a time in their lives when the present *and* the future feels uncertain, we get to be a part of putting the tools, knowledge, and skills in their hands to prepare them for a lifetime of success.

The CCIC is a unique high school setting, to say the least. Like many Career Technical Education centers, students get to experience multiple different career pathways on our campus earning high school credit, college credit, and industry certifications along the way.

While the mechanisms of this work are project-based authentic learning, the pinnacle of this work is the moment when students transfer from the classroom space to the *workplace* through an apprenticeship.

That opportunity to formally step into the workplace as *both a learner and as an employee* allows our students to build identity as a successful electrician, a successful classroom teacher, a successful machinist.

However, for many students, the artificial barrier of age is significant— excluding them from the opportunities an apprenticeship brings, often for all of junior year and most of senior year in high school.

What we see as the most critical nature of this legislation is that it encourages and funds the partnerships where students can participate in an apprenticeship as soon as 16 years of age, a time when they are fully supported by their high school network of teachers and staff. We all know the critical nature of supporting and guiding students in their social-emotional health during all stages of their educational journey.

This legislation provides opportunities and critically-needed funding for school districts and employers to work together to build these apprenticeships while school support is at its strongest,

creating a bridge to the workplace and to a career which can be forged into a lifelong and strong *pathway of purpose* for our youth.

Allow me to share some examples of current students to highlight the positive impact this legislation can have on so many others:

Logan apprentices with Mikron, an international company with a strong, local presence in Denver. Mikron creates high performance production systems, assembly lines, of high complexity and precision. Logan has done so well with Mikron that he is already a part of their off-site delivery and installation team of these high precision production lines both locally and nationally.

Jayden's story is one as a first-year apprentice in a local union shop, Sturgeon Electric. Jayden used his strong high school foundation to launch his career and now is already reaching back and supporting our current students as a mentor, an event judge, and a recruiter for future apprentices.

Ty is an apprentice with The Blind Institute and, in fact, is the first student in the nation who is blind to go through their apprenticeship program. As a result of his work, Ty is now also industry certified with Salesforce.

This legislation gives us the important leverage we need to provide these kinds of opportunities for all students starting while they are still in high school, in an effort to set them up for a lifetime of high wage, high skill and high demand employment. Most significantly, this legislation has the potential to create generational change, lifting students and families from poverty for this generation, the next, and possibly for good.

To quote our Director of Apprenticeship Success, Ashlin Montgomery, “school staff support allows for a tremendous amount of social growth inside and outside of work. As students learn to socialize with adult workers of other generations, we support them in navigating those spaces until they understand how to navigate them on their own.”

As a part of our work to expand the CCIC campus within the next two years, I've had the good fortune of traveling the country visiting campuses like the CCIC. As a part of that journey, I have been impressed with the students of Arizona, Washington, Ohio, and Florida. Each and every one of them are ready for this work. Each and every one of them are impressive in the amount of determination, dedication and talent that they bring.

These students are ready to get into the workplace to prove who they are to their community, to their families, and to themselves.

Again, on behalf of the Cherry Creek School District and the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus, I am honored to support this legislation and look forward to working with members of this subcommittee to bring these opportunities to more students and future apprentices across our entire great nation.