To: Chairman Tully, Vice-Chairwoman Carter & Members of the Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology Committee

From: Christopher Emigholz, NJBIA Chief Government Affairs Officer (cemigholz@njbia.org)

Date: June 15, 2023

RE: NJBIA Testimony in **Strong Support of A-2014 (Conaway, Wirths, Umba)/S-659 (Oroho, Greenstein)** – Manufacturing in Higher Education Act

Good morning! My name is Christopher Emigholz, and I am the Chief Government Affairs Officer for the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA). On behalf of our member companies that make NJBIA the largest and most impactful statewide business association in the nation, thank you to Assemblymen Conaway, Wirths and Umba for sponsoring this bill and to Chairman Tully for posting it and allowing us the opportunity to express our **very strong support for A-2014/S-659**.

Workforce Crisis

As we all see in windows and lit-up displays as we drive down any business district in our state, as we have all heard on the nightly news, as you hear from the businesses in your legislative districts, as we hear from our NJBIA members and as the data purports, we are in the middle of a workforce crisis. Confounding that crisis for our critical manufacturers is that they were already facing a workforce shortage before the pandemic that has only gotten worse. Even exacerbating that crisis further is the fact the manufacturing is not possible to do remotely in this atmosphere where working from home is growing ever more popular.

Importance of Manufacturers

Manufacturers are key to our state economy and job creation. The industry has about 250,000 jobs scattered throughout the state, contributed over $56 billion to the state gross domestic product in 2021, has much stronger wages and benefits than other industries and has a robust multiplier effect on the rest of the state economy. And in this industry that often does not require a college degree, finding a skilled workforce has often been the top complaint for years.

Importance of Bill

A-2014/S-659 addresses these manufacturing workforce deficiencies by establishing a multi-faceted and comprehensive approach to improve the technical/STEM workforce needed by New Jersey manufacturers and the entire state economy. To better position our workforce development pipeline to support the long-term needs of New Jersey manufacturers, this Manufacturing in Higher Education Act, is one of the most important things you can do to address the workforce crisis. That is why it is a priority for NJBIA, and that is why it is a top priority for the new Manufacturing Counts Partnership between the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP) and

NJBIA. The bill aligns many of the critical players in the workforce development space in government, higher education and K-12 and focuses them on meeting the needs of manufacturers in a variety of ways:

- Align government, education and training providers to manufacturing pathway offered through the New Jersey Community College Consortium's new Pathways to Career Opportunities program
- Establish a $10 million grant program to support manufacturing workforce development programs for education and training providers and to promote manufacturing career awareness
- Create a manufacturing liaison in the Business Action Center
- Direct state government to be more responsive to the needs of the manufacturing industry
- Establish a Manufacturing Council in the SETC

NJBIA thanks you all for the consideration of our perspective and urges this committee to vote "yes" on this critically important workforce development bill that is both pro-manufacturing and pro-employee. Please let me know if you have any questions at cemigholz@njbia.org.