

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs

Cc: Maxine Grad, Adam Greshin

From: Ted Laskaris, Associate Vice President Information Systems, Champlain College

Date: February 11, 2014

RE: S.220

Thank you for inviting me to provide testimony to this committee on S.220. I appreciate the opportunity to do so. My understanding of S.220 is that it seeks to provide a brighter line for the definition of independent contractors. If S.220 achieves its goal then the benefit will be job growth in Vermont. I would like to thank my representatives, Maxine Grad and Adam Greshin, who have encouraged me to reach out to the Senate and the House regarding this legislation.

I currently hold the position of Associate Vice President of Information Systems at Champlain College. I have been there for just under two years. Previous to that I held the position of Chief Technology Officer at Dwight Asset Management located in Burlington, Vermont for seven years and previous to that I held the position of Chief Information Officer at Denver Investment Advisors located in Denver, Colorado for five years. I have spent the past 25 years in technology in the fields of education and financial services.

Today I would like to share my perspective on job creation potential within the state of Vermont. I offer you only a practical view into how I have been provisioning skills and talents into an organization within the state of Vermont over the past fourteen years. I have no insight into workmen's compensation or unemployment insurance. My hope is that this testimony will convince you that if the laws were different than they are today that I would spend more time looking to hire in the state of Vermont than outside of it. Vermont is competing in the global marketplace for jobs and the current environment within our borders is not remotely competitive with options I have beyond our borders.

During my time at Dwight Asset Management I searched for technology talent both in and out of state. Competitive forces in Chittenden County for technology talent required me to become creative. I was able to quickly on-board the needed resources onto my team by contracting with Freeborders Inc. (www.freeborders.com), which at the time had offshore teams in Shenzhen, China – and still do today. Today at Champlain College I am actively looking to fill three technology positions on my team and am spending as much time looking out of state as I am in-state. Considering consultants who live in Vermont has more challenges than considering those who live out-of-state. In the final analysis I am left with two choices today – either hire an FTE within the state of Vermont or hire consulting resources outside of the state of Vermont.

I can act much more quickly with fewer hoops when I interface with out-of-state organizations. In both instances – because of the dearth of hire-able resources and because of the current evolution away from hiring full-time positions, I spend an increasing amount of time looking for consulting type resources. As a thought leader for the WaaS (Worker-As-A-Service) organization based in California (www.collabworks.com) I am actively seeking out skills and talents as discrete services rather than looking to fill full-time positions. More and more websites are offering sound options for this type of method to provision the necessary skills and talents I need in real-time.

If I were to leave this committee with any message it would be this: The definition of work is moving away from full-time jobs toward discrete workflows that can be sent to a consultant anywhere in the world. This permits me to meet one of my primary obligations, which is to deliver the best technology to my employer at the best cost. Of equal importance, it permits me to provide flexibility and speed to changing the technology skills and talents I need for the ever changing demands of the higher education business. I am confident you have all heard the prognosticators state that the organization of the future will have 40-60% of the current FTE count and will provision the remainder of the needed resources with consultants. I am here to be one data point to this committee that confirms this trend.

The current laws in Vermont for Unemployment Insurance, Workmen's Compensation and Consultants render a Vermont-based FTE not competitive versus worldwide consulting resources. While I am not an expert on these matters I can answer that any simplification of the current laws to enable me to hire local consultants in lieu of out-of-state consultants would create an in-state, agile environment that would be competitive with the global marketplace. As the "Consultant Workforce" grows worldwide Vermont can be one of the best places to hang out a shingle as a part of this force. We can grow jobs and we can start today with a clear and supportive definition of "consultant" that incentivizes me and other employers to look first in Vermont.

I would like to conclude my written testimony with a tidbit from a conversation between Bill Gates and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, which I recently heard on a radio show. One of them stated – and I paraphrase – 'From today over the next three to five years technology will have a more profound impact on our daily lives than since the invention of electricity to today'. While being mindful of the rights of workers is an imperative for lawmakers everywhere, the laws on the books today in Vermont are rendering our state workforce not-competitive. Said another way, we are choosing to let jobs leave the state or not be created within the state.

It is with an intense sense of urgency that I implore the Vermont state legislature in total to embrace this forward looking reality and support this new global work force. Contrary to many in this state, I have no fear of a brain-drain for Vermont. Our clean water, clean air and amazing lifestyle and values render this state one of the most sought after places to live in the world.

Thank you,
Ted Laskaris

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