

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
NED LAMONT**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 26-2**

**WHEREAS**, Connecticut's long-term economic competitiveness depends on a highly skilled workforce aligned with the needs of employers across high-growth industries, including advanced manufacturing, healthcare, education, information technology, clean energy, and financial services; and

**WHEREAS**, under the leadership of this Administration, Connecticut has made significant progress in strengthening education-to-employment alignment, including substantial growth in dual credit course completion, expansion of work-based learning opportunities, development of guided pathways, and increased collaboration among education, workforce, and industry partners; and

**WHEREAS**, these efforts are further reflected in the Governor's Workforce Strategic Plan, developed by the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC) and coordinated by the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), which establishes career pathways as a central pillar for advancing economic mobility and meeting workforce needs; and

**WHEREAS**, while Connecticut has established a strong foundation, continued progress requires deeper coordination, clearer statewide alignment, and accelerated implementation to ensure that all learners can access high-quality, industry-aligned career pathways that lead to post-secondary credentials and good jobs; and

**WHEREAS**, expanding access to credentials of value, including industry-recognized credentials, licensure opportunities, and certifications, will ensure that all learners, including those not pursuing dual enrollment or credit-bearing coursework, can access high-demand career pathways; and

**WHEREAS**, employers across Connecticut continue to report challenges in filling critical roles, and students and jobseekers benefit from clearer, more navigable pathways connecting education, training, and employment opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, national research and Connecticut's experience demonstrate that high-quality career pathways that integrates rigorous academics, work-based learning, industry-recognized credentials, and strong advising—significantly improves student outcomes, reduces the cost of postsecondary education, and strengthens workforce participation; and

**WHEREAS**, Connecticut has made important progress through initiatives in dual enrollment, work-based learning, guided pathways, and sector partnerships, but these efforts require statewide coordination, shared definitions, consistent quality standards, and aligned funding to achieve scale and sustainability; and

**WHEREAS**, the rapid evolution of the labor market, including the emergence of artificial intelligence and advanced technologies, requires continued modernization of instruction, credentialing, and employer engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, a successful statewide pathways system depends on collaboration, innovation, equity, data transparency, and a commitment to removing administrative, statutory, and regulatory barriers that impede progress; and

**WHEREAS**, Connecticut can strengthen its talent pipeline, expand economic mobility, and enhance its competitiveness by establishing a coordinated, cross-sector Pathways Commission charged with developing a comprehensive statewide strategy;

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, NED LAMONT**, Governor of the State of Connecticut, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the State of Connecticut, do hereby **ORDER AND DIRECT**:

1. Establishment and Purpose:

There is established a Connecticut Career Pathways Commission (“Commission”). The purpose of the Commission shall be to build upon and support implementation of the Governor’s Workforce Strategic Plan, with a specific focus on strengthening, aligning, and accelerating education and career pathways efforts across the state. The Commission shall operate in coordination with the Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC) and the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS).

2. Leadership and Coordination:

The Commission shall be chaired by Secretary Miguel Cardona, who shall report to the Governor. The Commission shall work in close partnership with the Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC), the Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), and relevant state agencies. OWS shall provide staff support and ensure alignment with existing statewide workforce planning and federally required plans.

3. Membership:

The Commission will include leaders from the K-12 and higher education and workforce board systems, employers, labor representatives, municipal leaders, governmental leaders, legislators, community representatives, and students.

4. Scope of Work:

The Commission shall operate for a period of 12 months and shall:

- a. Develop a sustainable statewide framework for coordination among all stakeholders in Connecticut’s education and career pathways ecosystem, and submit a draft report no later than December 31, 2026, and a final report no later than February 15, 2027, to the Governor and General Assembly.

- b. Incorporate existing best practices from within Connecticut and across the country to develop equitable, high-quality education and career pathways that address labor market needs, strengthen talent pipelines, and improve educational, employment, and economic outcomes across the state.
- c. Develop recommendations on state statutory, regulatory, and administrative reforms needed to support the improvement and expansion of pathways, including streamlining state funding sources, aligning credentialing and credit-transfer policies, modernizing instructional delivery, and reducing administrative and regulatory burdens.
- d. Develop an initial implementation plan to support execution of recommendations after the Commission concludes its work. Implementation of the plan shall be the responsibility of state leaders, agencies, and institutions.

5. Strategic Plan and Public Engagement:

- a. The Commission shall assess the state's education and career pathways system, develop a five-year Strategic Plan ("Plan") for Connecticut that supports student and worker needs, employer needs, and the state's long-term economic competitiveness, which shall be included in the report to the Governor and the General Assembly due February 15, 2027.
- b. The Commission shall seek stakeholder and public feedback throughout the development of the strategic plan.
- c. The Plan shall include recommendations aligned to the following four pillars:
  - i. Pathway Design & Delivery: Develop statewide definitions, quality standards, and design principles for high-quality pathways; identify priority industry-aligned pathways; and outline a governance process for ongoing pathway development and management.
  - ii. Credentialing & Quality: Recommend strategies to expand dual enrollment, early college, and the attainment of credentials of value—including industry-recognized credentials, licensure, and certifications; strengthen credit transfer and articulation; ensure that credentialing systems reflect employer needs and labor market demand; and ensure that students are supported with effective education and career advising that helps them navigate multiple high-quality pathway options..
  - iii. Work-Based Learning & Employer Engagement: Propose a statewide model for work-based learning, including employer engagement structures, standard agreements, and strategies to expand internships, apprenticeships, and other experiential learning opportunities.

- iv. Policy, Funding, Data & Accountability: Recommend state statutory, regulatory, and administrative changes; propose funding models and incentive structures; and outline a statewide data strategy to track participation, credential attainment, employment outcomes, and wage progression.
  
- 6. Recommendations from the Commission shall include strategies to integrate public funding sources, represent all regions of the state, and ensure that education and career pathways opportunities are accessible to all Connecticut residents. Recommendations shall incorporate strategies to provide equitable opportunities for people of any age, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, race, color, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, individuals with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, military service members and veterans, immigrants, and refugees.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Dated at Hartford, Connecticut, this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April 2026.



NED LAMONT  
Governor

By His Excellency's Order



STEPHANIE THOMAS  
Secretary of the State

CONNECTICUT  
SECRETARY OF THE STATE

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