

~~HOUSE~~ **BUSINESS & COMMERCE COMMITTEE TESTIMONY**
JIM QUINTEN
AUTOMOTIVE PARTS AND SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chairman and members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Jim Quinten. I am President of the Automotive Parts and Services Association (APSA). We represent approximately 1200 auto parts and paint stores, machine shops, and repair shops throughout the State of Texas, employing approximately 15,000 people. I am also past Chairman of SkillsUSA Texas, a high school student organization consisting of over 14,000 students and an Industry Board member of the Texas Industrial Vocation Association (TIVA), an association for Career & Technology instructors.

APSA and its members, for many years, have worked very closely with the high school Career and Technology programs throughout the State of Texas. Many of our employees come directly from these programs. Every year APSA awards post secondary scholarships. We are in the process of reviewing over 100 applicants.

The Automotive Aftermarket industry is in need of highly trained technicians to work on today's complex vehicles. The days of the wrench turning mechanic are gone. Technicians must be educated in reading, writing, math, electronics, and physics. They must be capable of identifying and analyzing problems. In other words they must be able to think. Because in their training, they apply academic knowledge while working with highly sophisticated diagnostic and on board automotive technology, they learn faster and have a better understanding of the academic courses. It is amazing when reviewing transcripts for scholarships, many times we see students performing poorly their freshman and sophomore years but grades improve when they start a CTE program. At that point they have an interest in learning and their academics make more sense. When the academic curriculum is tied to high quality technical studies, you will get more kids through high school better prepared to deal with life's challenges. Plus these programs keep kids in school because they have an opportunity for a very good paying career when they graduate. Many school administrators still look at these programs as dumping grounds. That kind of thinking does not work. It is a constant battle to keep CTE programs in the high schools.

Career and Technology programs, however, involve more than learning technical skills. Through student organizations, such as SkillsUSA-Texas, students are better prepared to enter the workforce. They receive training in leadership, work ethics and communications skills. You can ask any businessman, today's entry-level employee is sorely lacking in work ethics.

In the Automotive Aftermarket industry there are many opportunities in addition to an Auto Tech. There are opportunities for store and distribution management, sales and sales management and many others.

Therefore, instead of looking for ways to cut funding, which we encounter every session, we need to be looking for ways to increase and expand CTE programs, because CTE programs meet the needs of industry by providing a better prepared employee and citizen.