



March 31, 2015

The Honorable Don Gaetz  
420 Senate Office Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear Senator Gaetz,

The Manatee Chamber of Commerce with over 2,000 members representing 76,000 employees in our area opposes Senate Bill 1252 relating to the name change of Manatee Technical College.

If passed, SB 1252 will force Manatee Technical College to drop “college” from its name. This bill undermines the reasons for changing the name to college to begin with, goes against a local decision, confuses potential students, and creates undue financial burden on the college and community.

Vocational-technical centers were established in the sixties in Florida. Most changed their names to technical institutes in the nineties and to technical colleges in the past year. Each name change is a reflection of the times. Most of the southern States, and many other parts of the country, changed the names of their career and technical centers to technical colleges years earlier. Approximately 70 percent of our programs have articulation agreements with the state college(s) to award college credit that students earn from their MTC coursework when they are accepted by the state college; our college name more readily communicates that fact to students. This bill would take away the right for Manatee Technical College to offer Applied Associate’s Degrees, which has been instrumental in filling local jobs in our area.

The name change to College in 2014 had the support of the Bradenton Area Economic Development Corporation, Manatee Chamber of Commerce, the Bradenton Herald, area business and industry, the Manatee County School Board, the college’s Board of Governors, faculty, staff, and students.

If this bill passes, it suggests that Manatee Technical College (MTC) change its name to Manatee Career Center (MCC) or return to Manatee Technical Institute. The vast majority of MTC students were so excited for the name change from Institute to College - it carries meaning for them that goes deep and impacts their self-esteem. As one student stated when we were in the process of changing the name from institute to college, *“I’ll be so glad when people quit thinking I don’t have a high school diploma or stop asking me when I’m going to get out of the institution.”*

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Manatee Technical College has just spent thousands of dollars to change signage and will have to spend thousands to change it again in the space of less than one year. Manatee Technical College is anticipating an increase in enrollment next year due to the name change, as experienced by technical colleges in other states. The loss of increased enrollment will mean a potential loss of jobs and an increased challenge in meeting the demands of local employers. The financial impact of that is enormous and far reaching at a time when business and industry is expanding their reliance on the college to meet local employment demands for a skilled workforce.

The Manatee Chamber encourages you to not support this bill as we need a well trained workforce in Manatee County and this bill will hurt many great things that have taken place on our road to train our community for employment. As an alternative to opposing this bill, we recommend an exemption for Manatee Technical College.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Trudy Moon

*Chairman-Elect of the Board*

*cc: Doug Wagner, Director, Manatee Technical College*