



HAMILTON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MAYOR

WESTON WAMP

For Immediate Release

May 12, 2025

Contact: Haley Burton, 423-619-5311

Wamp Administration Launches Council on Career & Technical Education to Expand Opportunities for Students and Strengthen Workforce Pipeline

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN — In a bold step toward transforming the future of workforce development in Hamilton County, Mayor Weston Wamp has announced the creation of the Council on Career & Technical Education, a new advisory body of local industry and education leaders committed to expanding access to hands-on, skills-based learning.

Unveiled during the Mayor's third State of the County address, the council represents a key milestone in the Wamp administration's commitment to revitalize vocational education and ensure that Hamilton County students are equipped to succeed in high-demand fields. The council's work comes at a time when career and technical programs are experiencing record interest, and local employers are in urgent need of skilled talent.

"Career and technical education isn't just making a comeback, it's becoming essential," said Mayor Wamp. "As our economy evolves, students need more than traditional pathways. They need clear, guided access to meaningful careers. This council will help us make smart, strategic investments in CTE that align with real-world job opportunities across our community."

The council will meet monthly through the end of the year and deliver a set of strategic recommendations in early 2026. Among its priorities is advising on the development of the Franklin-Roberts Future Ready Center, a state-of-the-art CTE hub planned for the historic Golden Gateway campus. The center is set to become a cornerstone of the county's efforts to prepare the next generation of skilled workers.

"I've seen how technical education can change lives, whether it's a young person finding their path or someone getting a second chance," said Kenny Smith, former training director at the Chattanooga Electrical Joint Apprenticeship & Training Center. "I'm proud to be a member of this council, where we can help ensure students have real opportunities to pursue rewarding careers and build successful futures right here in Hamilton County."

Between 2018 and 2023, Hamilton County's postsecondary readiness rate climbed from 37% to nearly 53%, thanks in large part to expanded CTE offerings. As interest in these programs grows, the Council on Career & Technical Education will play a critical role in aligning these opportunities with industry needs, creating a clear

path from classroom learning to high-demand careers. Mayor Wamp has set a bold goal of increasing that rate to 75% in the next five years, and this council is a key step in bringing that goal to fruition.

Council on Career & Technical Education Members:

- **Jim Bailey**, Vice President of Sales, Jake Marshall/Acme Industrial & Former President, Acme Industrial Piping
- **Kimberly Bowen**, Senior Vice President of Global Talent & Inclusion, Unum
- **Brad Cobb**, President, Bowers Automotive Group
- **Joe Coke**, Coordinator, Plumbers & Steamfitters UA Local 43 Joint Apprenticeship & Training Center
- **Bo Drake**, Vice President of Tennessee College of Applied Technology & Economic Workforce Development, Chattanooga State Community College
- **Brad Leon**, Executive Director, BlueSky Tennessee Institute
- **Ketha Richardson**, Director of Workforce Development & Corporate Training, EPB
- **Dr. Justin Robertson**, Superintendent, Hamilton County Schools
- **Gene-O Shipley**, Shipley Plumbing Co. & Hamilton County Commissioner, District 1
- **Kenny Smith**, Former Hamilton County School Board Chair & Former Training Director, Chattanooga Electrical Joint Apprenticeship & Training Center
- **Weston Wamp**, Hamilton County Mayor

###