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TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO: House Commerce and Economic Development Committee
FROM: John Fischer, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Education
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Education and the Economy

In recent years, significant conversations and debate have occurred around Vermont's Career Technical Education (CTE) system. Vermont offers CTE primarily through regional shared time centers, hosted at a high school within the specified region, where students attend courses during their 11th and/or 12th grades. Fewer students attend during their 9th and 10th grade in pre-tech exploratory or foundation courses or "try out" courses in State Statute (Title 16, 1562).

Many national discussions and studies have been dedicated to reviewing and designing the relationships between education and workforce/economic development and support. (CORD, NASDCTEc, Georgetown, OCTAE) As noted in the recent Georgetown University study, "the United States is more educated than ever. In 1973, workers with postsecondary education held only 28 percent of jobs; by comparison, they held 59 percent of jobs in 2010 and will hold 65 percent of jobs in 2020. (Carnevale 2013). As a state, if we intend to improve our competitiveness in a more global economy, we need to provide more opportunities for Vermont learners to be prepared for their careers of the future in livable wage positions.

As we moved into the 21st century, it was clear that the notion of career ready had changed. High school graduates in the past century had many job options available to them. In the agrarian and early industrial age, many jobs existed for citizens of all ages which required little if any advanced education or training. Many of these jobs today are a function of automation and computerization. The programming and repair of the automated equipment are among the high demand occupations, requiring advanced skills and knowledge as well as higher cognitive functions to "manage" the process, analyze the outcomes and problem-solve unforeseen circumstances.

Today there is a dual emphasis in CTE on learning which is designed to prepare students to be college and career ready. CTE provides students with the academic and technical skills necessary to succeed in future careers. CTE prepares students for the world of work by introducing them to workplace competencies and reinforces rigorous academic standards by integrating these standards in the career context.

These rigorous CTE programs of study:

- Include academic and CTE content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses,
- Offer the opportunity, where appropriate, for secondary students to acquire postsecondary credits, and
- Lead to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

THE FUTURE OF CTE IN VERMONT

The VT CTE system is under-utilized and could serve the workforce and economic development needs of the State in a more robust manner. Clearer focus on priority sectors and consistent quality outcomes would better serve the State of VT as well as our youth and adults, business and industry.

The current CTE system consists of 15 regional secondary CTE centers and 2 CTE centers located within independent schools serving the region as a CTE center. (Lyndon Institute and St. Johnsbury Academy). There are over 200 programs throughout the State CTE system offered in a variety of delivery systems (part time, half time, full time) and with a variety of outcomes. These programs are organized within the National career cluster and pathway systems consisting of 16 clusters and 79 pathways which align to various labor sectors and occupational codes.

The next generation CTE program will evolve over the next year or so. The Vermont Agency of Education in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Labor and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development has identified 6 priority sectors/clusters to focus future program development. These include:

- Travel/Tourism and Business Systems (Culinary, Hospitality, Accounting, Management, Entrepreneurship)
 - Manufacturing/Engineering (STEM)
 - Construction/Green Building and Design
 - Agriculture, Local Food Systems, , Natural Resources
 - Information Technology (Networking, Software Development, Website Design)
 - Health/Medical
- The Agency will organize State-wide Councils who will guide each of the priority sectors to develop career pathways and Programs of Study (POS). Council membership will include education, higher education, business/industry sector representatives.
 - The charge/mission of each State-wide council will be to provide input to the development of the Programs of Study (POS) covering grades 9-14 (including non-college postsecondary opportunities), endorse a single, high quality POS for each priority cluster/sector, recommend industry certifications and other outcomes required in each POS, manage and update the POS competency model and standards as needed, monitor quality outcomes of POS.

- The Councils will advocate and provide a strong State-wide effort towards comparable quality of programming, spanning middle school through apprenticeship, career and college, as well as lifelong learning.
- Comprehensive career development programs will be essential as well as personal learning plans for each student beginning in middle school. Opportunities for flexible learning opportunities which ensure high quality, rigorous integrated academics must be accessible to all students.
- Councils will identify challenges and/or barriers to effective implementation and access to high priority POS.

PROGRAM OF STUDY DESIGN FRAMEWORK

"A program of study is a structured sequence of courses designed to ensure college and career readiness leading to a postsecondary-level credential." - Operational definition

