



219 North Main Street, Suite 402  
Barre, VT 05641 (p) 802-479-1030 | (f) 802-479-1835

**To: Representative Dave Sharpe and House Committee on Education**  
**From: Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary and Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary**  
**Date: 2/24/16**  
**RE: Testimony on dr req 16-831 – draft 3.1- An Act Relating to Career and Technical Education**

Thank you for the support and interest of this committee in the needs of CTE students in Vermont. We applaud high-quality efforts to ensure that our students are graduating career and college ready. In the Act 51 report, we recommended a study to explore the governance and financing of CTE in the state. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the draft bill that was shared with us last week.

*Scope of the work*

The bill proposes to assign someone to the Agency to conduct the study. However:

1. We have trouble filling limited service positions, due to relatively low pay and short duration, so this would be unlikely to help.
2. Even if we were able to find candidates, they would be unlikely to have the technical expertise to do the work. In addition, limited service positions create demands in terms of on-boarding and bringing them up to speed. In general, we find limited service positions are not a good use of resources for technically complicated work. By the time these people know enough to contribute, the term of service expires.
3. A report of this kind requires technical expertise related to governance, education funding, school governance, Act 77 and Perkins funding. This knowledge is spread across several individuals in the AOE, who would have to be involved in this work. Most of these individuals are also involved in implementation of Act 46.
4. If what you want is a study, we recommend that for the sake of efficiency, you task the AOE with producing a report, along the lines of the Act 51 report, but focused on CTE funding and governance, including governance in a newly configured, post-act 46 context, and not make this a committee task. AOE will consult with stakeholder groups and national groups, as we do in the normal course of business, as part of the process of creating the report. We need to warn you up front that this may involve substantial work, especially as Perkins is

currently being reauthorized, and we recommend a two-year minimum timeline for this report.

CTE work, in general, involves multiple funding streams and a heavily regulated environment, so an effective study could not be done by a short-term employee without the requisite knowledge base. It is perhaps a bit unrealistic to commit to such a hire/process when past experience has proven unsuccessful. In addition, even if this person were hired, the legal assistance and fiscal work required would all have to be done with our current Perkins staff, who are already well into new initiatives.

#### *Recommended new model*

As currently written, the proposed bill indicates that PK-16 Committee “shall include a recommendation for a new model where career technical centers are under the governance of the Vermont State Colleges.” This idea, which was actually not mentioned at all in the Act 51 report submitted by the Interagency team, would be quite a shift for the state

1. It would in effect put nearly \$100 million in education dollars under the governance of the state colleges. Act 60 set up the Education Fund specifically for K-12 activities, it would be unclear whether in this case, the dollars were being used for K-12 purposes or college purposes.
2. Moving governance (to colleges) away from the funding source (districts) erodes accountability for using dollars well and efficiently.
3. Until now, CTE has operated as a program within K-12 education, and degrees are granted by sending schools. This substantially alters that relationship.
4. Colleges operate as enterprises; they survive by competing for students. What will be the impact of intensifying this competition on students who do not attend CTE?
5. A transition of this sort would incur substantial transition costs, and disrupt current initiatives, including the priority sectors work.
6. A transition of this sort would erode our current capacity to support flexible pathways (which requires close connection between general middle/high school education and CTE), and would stall current successful efforts to integrate high level academic skills and rigor into CTE.

#### *Disruption of current initiatives and priority sector work:*

AOE has been working hard to advance our vision of moving forward and capitalizing on the priority sector Programs of Study; this vision, to our knowledge, has been widely well-received so far and has the support of our Career and Tech Centers.

We presented at the Vermont CTE Directors Association, the State Workforce Development Board, and the State Board of Education recently, as well as to both Education committees of the legislature. We have heard repeatedly that this is the right direction to move in. The vision mapped out in the Act 51 report capitalizes on core work that has already been happening among CTEs and postsecondary institutions during the recent past, refines and extends that focus to a true statewide level, and has a built-in accountability plan for monitoring success.

*Disruption of Act 46 work:*

Our school system is currently in the midst of policy instability unlike anything it has seen in at least 100 years. It is working to respond and implement a phenomenal policy load related to Act 77, Act 166, the new Education Quality Standards and Act 46. These policies are having profound and unpredictable effects on schools and districts. We feel very strongly that we cannot make more demands on these systems until they have had time to respond to this current policy load.

We also agree that CTE governance and finance need to be evaluated, but this is not the time to do so. We caution that the timing of such a large change in the CTE governance model might be particularly challenging given current district work around Act 46. It might be better to introduce such a change, if it is ultimately recommended, at a time when there is more stability in the K-12 system overall and at a time at which districts are larger. At this time, it would just be a disruption and source of anxiety that eroded efforts on these other fronts.

A few additional thoughts to consider:

1. Governance structure at the postsecondary level (i.e., four-year colleges), including faculty decision-making regarding the curriculum, would likely require significant buy-in system-wide, before such a transition were successfully brought about. It would be a shame to move the CTEs to a new governance structure without first getting assurance that the relevant Programs of Study at the postsecondary level exist. In fact, this is exactly the work that we at the AOE have promised to lead (see Act 51).
2. We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that CTE is currently working very WELL for most students who are engaged in it (see Outcomes attachment). The primary challenges, as we see them, are that we need (1) stronger connections with business and industry sectors to link CTE students more effectively with state economic initiatives and jobs, (2) greater/earlier exposure to CTE and "21<sup>st</sup> century" models of thinking and work-based learning, and (3) tighter decision-making between CTE directors and high school personnel regarding which students attend CTE. We believe that we can effectively begin to address the first

two challenges by following the action plan mapped out in the Act 51 report; we are a bit unsure how moving CTE to the VSC system would address the third.

3. There are additional governance structures that we recommend considering “in the mix” as well. For instance, perhaps investing in more comprehensive high schools, a statewide system of CTE academies, or single CTE/board/district-level governance models might actually make better sense for Vermont in the long run. A well-crafted governance study should be able to deliver the specific pros and cons of each of these approaches, ultimately and definitively indicating the best path moving forward.

We urge the Committee to consider these issues we have raised as you deliberate further. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic.

Table 1a. Number of postsecondary articulation agreements.

CTE REGION	#CENTERS	#ARTIC AGREEMENT*
Barre	1	1
Chittenden	2	2
Cold Hollow	1	1
Green Mountain	1	1
Hannaford	1	1
Hartford	1	1
North Country	1	1
Canaan	1	0
Northwest	1	1
Randolph	1	1
River Bend	1	1
St. Johnsbury	2	2
River Valley	1	1
Southeast	1	1
Southwest	1	1
Stafford	1	1

Note: There is currently a state-wide articulation agreement in place between the AOE, CTE centers and VTC, and the details of a similar agreement are being negotiated with CCV.

\* Locally negotiated articulation agreements exist with out of state institutions. The AOE has not collected that information since 2013.

Table 1b. Post-secondary enrollment of CTE students

School Year	CTE PS Initial Enrollments	CTE PS Persistence (3 Semesters)	CTE PS Persistence Rate
2009	608	438	72.0%
2010	642	425	66.2%
2011	612	419	68.5%
2012	605	435	71.9%
2013	562	377	67.1%
2009-2013	3029	2094	69.1%

Table 1c. Post-secondary enrollment of CTE students – Top 5 programs

CTE Program Area	2009 – 2013 # of CTE PS Enrollments
Health Careers	316
Human Services	193
Design Visual Communication	150
Culinary Arts	131
Automotive Technology	100

Table 1d. Post-secondary enrollment of CTE students – Top 10 institutions

Institution Name	2009 – 2013 # of CTE PS Enrollments
Community College of Vermont	692
Vermont Technical College	257
Lyndon State College	173
Castleton State College	172
University of Vermont	130
Johnson State College	106
Champlain College	68
University of Northwestern Ohio	62
Southern Vermont College	56
Paul Smith’s College of the Adirondacks	54

(Note: Not all of these are in the VSC.)

**Table 2. Performance Outcomes for CTE Students**

Graduation Rate: 99% of CTE students who “concentrated” [completed at least half of the required sequence of instruction] their studies in technical education graduated from high school.

Industry Recognized Credentials: 67% of concentrators left with an industry recognized credential, such as an LNA (Licensed Nurse Assistant), Game of Logging, or Cisco Networking Certification.

Dual Enrollment: 10.78% of CTE students received at least one transcribed course through dual enrollment (2014-15).

College Enrollment: 41% of Vermont students who had participated in CTE were enrolled in post-secondary education.