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TESTIMONY

FROM: Jay Ramsey, State Director, Career Technical Education
SUBJECT: **17-1125 - An act relating to career technical education**
DATE: February 23, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this draft bill that proposes to add an additional weighting in the long-term membership for career technical education students, and that proposes to create a \$1,000,000 grant program intended to support CTE programming for students in grade 7.

Given that this is a draft, I am making the assumption that you would like the Agency's perspective on the merits of this proposal. The Administration is reviewing all proposals of this nature through three lenses: affordability, growing the economy, and protecting the most vulnerable populations.

I am here to talk about this proposal as an expansion of CTE programming, the impact of this proposal on personnel resources on my team, and to connect the proposal to the Governor's proposed budget.

I'm joined here today by Brad James, Education Finance Manager. The draft proposes some significant changes to the weighted long-term membership and we want to make sure the education finance perspective is provided to you so before I proceed with my remarks, I want to turn to Brad to discuss the first part of the draft about weighed membership.

BRAD JAMES

Amending Section 1, 16 V.S.A. § 4010

When I read the draft I couldn't determine what adding an additional long-term membership class does. Is it an entirely new approach to funding CTE? If so, aren't there other sections of the statute that need to be changed or is this change intended to pay for the \$1,000,000 grant program?

There was an overview of this bill on February 15. I was not able to attend this session but I was able to read some of the notes that my colleague took. The discussion provides some additional context that is not present in the draft, but even so it isn't clear what the intent of changing 4010 (c) is, and if the addition of Section 2 is connected to the change in (c).

There are too many unknowns for us to fully endorse such a significant change to the long-term membership classes and weighting system.

Adding Section 2, 16 V. S. A. §4010

This part of the draft is very exciting. The need for earlier career exposure and awareness and for introduction to CTE is key to ensuring our students are aware of all options available to them. There is a clear connection to existing policy regarding personalized learning and career awareness; there is a clear connection to the Agency's theory of action related to CTE: investing in a robust high-quality career advising and guidance system, and developing and investing in career pathways.

I would temper this excitement with the reality of the staffing situation of the Agency's CTE team. If you recall from our introductory presentation, back in January, there are three people on my team: me, a program consultant, and a data person. I will tell you first hand that it is all we can do to manage and oversee the existing grant programs and statutory obligations that currently exist. In the interest of furthering the Governor's priorities around affordability and growing the economy, naturally there is a lot of interest in CTE. There is a significant need for state government to collaborate so we can reduce duplication of services and improve the efficiency of our workforce preparation systems. I am frequently meeting with and supporting groups of teachers and administrators.

If I'm worried about anything related to this proposed grant program for 7th graders it's that the Agency doesn't have the resources to support the implementation this new program. The opportunity to impact student's lives is great; the opportunity to bring about change to how we provide career technical education is great; the opportunity for this be a fiduciary pass through and for the program to be mediocre is also great.

Without adding an additional position to the CTE team, my great fear is that this well intentioned, clearly connected, initiative of this scale will not produce the results we all hope it will.

Would the committee consider a smaller amount, over an extended period of time to allow for pilot projects that can help the Agency determine the right parameters and deliverables for the project? We also advocate that the program be used to help target exposure of non-traditional students (or recruitment of them) into programs aligned with high-priority sectors (e.g., young women in STEM, construction, and information technology; young men in health sciences)

In summary, we have some concerns about the draft bill. We would like to see it more closely align with the administration's recommended budgetary goals.

We appreciate all of the attention the Legislature is giving to CTE this session and look forward to continuing to find affordable solutions that help our economy grow, and that protect and support our vulnerable populations.