

Testimony of Patricia Moulton, President of Vermont Technical College
Re: S. 135 Sections E.1 and E.2
April 12, 2017. 9am.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I understand you want me to speak to sections E.1 and E.2 of this bill.

I can speak to you today from the perspective of Vermont Technical College.

I have also had the honor of serving as both the Commissioner of Labor for Governor Douglas and the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development for Governor Shumlin.

In both of those capacities I had the opportunity to work a great deal on workforce development issues.

I implemented the Workforce Education and Training Fund while at Labor.

So I am quite familiar with the language and the "Next Generation Commission" report which gave rise to this fund.

Now I have the opportunity to work with that fund and the Department of Labor as an educational provider.

My comments are brief and I am happy to answer any questions.

On Section E.1.

Much of the language was drafted when the law was first passed.

The addition of the language requiring the Commissioner of Labor to report on the gender of trainees makes sense.

We at Vermont Tech and elsewhere are working in include more women and men in non-traditional fields.

So knowing how we are moving the needle is helpful.

Section 8 provides all new language on coordinating a "comprehensive workforce development strategy."

This seems in line with federal goals of having a workforce plan which the state Workforce Development Board is charged with doing.

The only issue I would see for the Department of Labor is the provision to "recruit new workers to the state."

That is not really the charge of the Vermont Department of Labor.

Their charge is working with Vermonters and Vermont employers.

The charge of recruitment of new workers is in line with the work of Agency of Commerce.

Their marketing plan include strategies to recruit more people to come to Vermont.

This includes those who have left Vermont as well as those who would like to come to Vermont.

I also do not believe there is any proposed budget for VDOL to do this. They will not be able to use federal dollars for this purpose.

I would think you could live without that language. I recommend removing it or moving it to the Agency of Commerce.

On Section E.2

I see the eligibility has expanded to include middle schools.

While I see value in that, will the appropriation increase?

My understanding has been there hasn't been enough money in the WETF to meet current demands.

So limited resources will be spread thinner.

Yes, I see tremendous value in adding career services and an activity. But again, will the resources expand?

I ask that the language be clearer on what career services? Will this include funding career counselors?

There is language in the training section about not "duplicate, supplant, or replace other available training funded with public money.

That language should be duplicated in Section 4.

There should also be language indicating grant should be to provide services not currently available at the applying school. That the career services are additive, not funding what is already occurring.

I strongly support career focus and planning programs for students starting in middle school.

Any improvement in career planning is a good idea.

But it should be part of a comprehensive program that is cumulative through middle and on to high school.

This should not be a "one off" of career services in middle schools that does not carry forward to high school.

There should be a continuum of career services.

Career services should also include a strong focus on continuing education beyond high school.

Today so many careers will require education beyond high school. Any career focus must include opportunities for post-secondary education.

And not just four year degrees, but certificates, associates, apprenticeship and other certifications.

So adding some more structure to this language such as you have in the training grants is important.

Further, these grants should not be forever. They should provide seed funding to get new programs started that schools or others can fund on their own after 2 or three years.

But I overall worry about resources.

When the WETF was created, it included career exploration, internships and more but the fund was double the size.

Here you are expanding the program but not the resources.

I don't know how helpful that will go.

Those are my thoughts.

Again, thank you for the opportunity!

Questions?