

Representative Sharpe and members of the House Committee on Education; thank you for this opportunity to speak about S 257 An Act relating to miscellaneous changes to the education law. My name is Eileen Illuzzi and I am the Director of the North Country Career Center in Newport, and a Commissioner of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, also known as NEASC, Commission on Public School Committee on Technical and Career Institutions. As such, I would like to give you my perspective of S 257 and the proposed changes to educator licensing. Let me start by giving you a little bit of history about NEASC. There are actually four Commissions; Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Commission on International Education, Commission on Independent Schools and the Commission on Public Schools. The public schools commission is broken down into three committees; Elementary and Middle Schools, Secondary Schools and Technical and Career Institutions, the latter being the commission that accredits Career and Technical Education Schools throughout New England. I make this distinction because it is an important one. Each commission and committee has its own standards of accreditation. The Commission on Independent Schools does not have the same standards and requirements for teacher licensure as the Commission on Public Schools, also known as CPS. To make sure I was not misrepresenting NEASC I checked in with them and received the following response:

“NEASC does not accredit programs (“a school-based teacher quality and performance measurement program...”). Centers that are NEASC accredited employ faculty who have earned the appropriate state teaching certificates. Public school teachers need to be certified to teach their subjects (academic and CTE). This is part of the definition of “highly qualified teacher”. Independent schools – like St Johnsbury Academy – are exempt. So...no...CTCI/ CPS would not accredit a CTE center that was not using licensed teachers”

So from the point of view of the Commission on Public Schools, this suggestion is not viable for public institutions.

As a career center director, I can certainly understand that it is sometimes very difficult to fill CTE teaching positions. Yes, the teachers are experts in their industry or field of practice, but that does not make them expert teachers. They need to learn differentiated teaching methods, classroom management skills, pedagogy, Vermont law and many other crucial skills that go in to being a high quality teacher. I testified yesterday in Senate Education about CTE and workforce development, and one thing that everyone there agreed upon is that CTE needs to offer rigorous programs of study to give our secondary students the best possible chances at future success. If we change the requirement for all CTE teachers, are we saying that they do not need to meet the same standards as all public school teachers? And what would that say to all of the CTE teachers who have gone through the licensing process already? I understand that there are directors or principals that feel that the CTE Teacher Prep program is not a good fit for everyone. I would suggest instead of eliminating the licensing requirement that we review the teacher prep program and suggest changes that can streamline the process. I have also heard that Praxis can be a challenge for some potential teachers. Again, that is one part of the licensing process that may be able to change **for all teachers** if it is not appropriate. I do not believe CTE should be singled out as the teachers have the same charge for educating our public school students.

