

Testimony of Eileen Illuzzi, North Country Career Center Director
to the Vermont House Committee on Education; January 17, 2017

Representative Sharpe, Representative Pearce and members of the Committee on Education; I would like to thank you for allowing me to testify regarding Vermont Career and Technical Education (CTE) this morning. I regret that I was unable to be here on Thursday when you took testimony from my colleagues. In reviewing Thursday's testimony, I see that you have already received a wealth of information regarding Career and Technical Education, so rather than repeat what you have heard, I would like to tell you about the North Country Career Center (NCCC). Our center is considered a "half day program"; that is, students attend their academic classes at their home high school and come to NCCC for their technical classes for approximately 120 minutes per day. We have only two sending high schools; North Country Union High School (our home high school) and Lake Region Union High School. Students in the eleventh and twelfth grades are eligible to participate in these programs. Historically, we enroll approximately 65% of all eleventh and twelfth grade students from North Country plus an additional 35-45 per year from Lake Region. (Enrollment for the past five years, beginning with the current year, is 252, 256, 310, 322 and 320). We also offer one semester "pre-tech foundation" (PTF) classes to ninth and tenth graders from North Country (enrollment for the last five years is 167 for semester one of this year, 251, 319, 344 and 432). We are unable to offer PTF classes to Lake Region students because of the travel time involved. While our percentage of students has remained the same, our overall enrollment has declined because of the declining population of students. We have adjusted the number of programs we offer to reflect the current population as well as the employment opportunities for students. I have included a copy of our Program of Studies so you can see the broad ranges of classes that we offer.

The mission of the North Country Career Center is "Preparing Students for Career, College and Community". I believe this is an accurate goal for CTE in general. You have heard testimony regarding the change from the old image of vocational education to the new CTE as well the need for post-secondary training- whether it is through college, technical school, apprenticeships or further on-the-job training through an employer. But we also believe that students need to be community ready. Students need to be civic minded, service oriented and accepting of other's differences. I have included our "Portrait of a Career Center Student", describing how we define career, college and community ready. CTE allows students to apply academic skills in combination with technical skills in a way that is relevant to their interests and career goals. By adding a dimension of "community ready" we believe that students will discover deeper purpose for what they do. We emphasize problem solving, communication, self-direction and responsibility.

We also provide opportunities for young students to experience CTE. We have an after-school STEM program for elementary school students, host a district-wide STEM Day for all fourth-grade students, do joint activities with the North Country Union Junior High School and give tours to all eighth graders in the district. Many of these activities are funded through our Carl B Perkins grant. Young students are excited by CTE. We believe that given the opportunity, many

more students would participate in programs at an earlier age and find more relevance in their education.

As we move to proficiency based graduation requirements, students will be able to demonstrate academic proficiencies through their CTE programs and earn academic credit through their technical programs. Some programs are doing this now through dual enrollment courses. Students are receiving core academic credit at both the high school and college level. As students develop their Personalized Learning Plans, they will not only meet the required standards, they will be able to study what interests them most in a way that is relevant to their interests and learning styles; much the way they do now in CTE.

NCCC has been involved with the VT AOE in several projects including the career pathways and program of studies work. By developing rigorous programs of study in CTE, we will ensure that all students will receive challenging and relevant programs at every CTE center in Vermont. Further development of career pathways will help students realize how to achieve their educational and career goals together. I have included examples of pathways models at NCCC, but there is a need to expand upon this and include middle school if we truly want to prepare our students.

Thank you for your interest and continued support of Career and Technical Education.