



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

TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO: House Education Committee
FROM: Jay Ramsey, State Director for Career Technical Education, Agency of Education
SUBJECT: S.257, An Act Relating to Miscellaneous Changes to Education Law, Draft 8.1 Section 11 re: CTE Teacher Licensure
DATE: April 12, 2018

Personally, I find the work of trades people fascinating. I had the opportunity on Monday to go to Benoit Electric with a group of students to learn about the Registered Apprenticeship program run by Benoit. It was great to see students exploring that as a possibility for their next steps. It was also interesting to hear personal stories from young people who eased out of high school and into a lucrative career path as electricians. I found myself wondering if I could make that change, what would it be like? As I thought about it, I remembered there's a test. In order to become a licensed electrician, plumber, or any number of other professional and technical occupations, there is a test.

The testimony you heard yesterday was certainly compelling. Mr. Guckin did a great job talking about the potential impact on his teachers in 4 years when the window of the apprenticeship license closes. I wasn't in the room for Mr. Olson's testimony, but as I have heard his concerns and Superintendent Moran's concerns, it has to do with a limited pool of qualified candidates because they self-selected out of the application process for a number of reasons – licensing and pay are likely at the top. These are issues that other states struggle with; recruiting and retaining qualified individuals from industry to teach in CTE classrooms is a national issue, especially in engineering and manufacturing. There are a number of solutions that could be considered and that I will be discussing with my educator quality colleagues, but that's not why I'm here today. I'm here to speak to the proposal in Section 11.

Here's the background on this issue: late last year, Dr. Jason Di Giulio, the CTE center director at Lyndon Institute asked a question of Ms. Price – the question was about whether or not Lyndon Institute's CTE teachers needed to be licensed. The answer came in a memo on December 8, 2017, from Secretary Holcombe to all CTE centers, that teachers in CTE programs, regardless of location, needed to be licensed educators. Since then, I believe Dr. Di Giulio has made a plan for all of his teachers to be licensed.

Another piece of information that is important in this is that, as Ms. Price alluded to yesterday, the CTE directors, through their federal Perkins funds, pay for the operation of the CTE teacher preparation program run by Vermont Tech. Since 2008, and probably even before that, every

CTE center, including St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute, have contributed funds to pay for the operation of the program for the benefit of soon-to-be CTE teachers around the state.

The question of CTE Teacher Licensure as it relates to current state law and policy has three concerns: equity, quality, and financial.

EQUITY: 16 VSA §§ 1531 & 1532 give the State Board of Education the authority to adopt minimum standards of operation and performance of the CTE centers and programs. The statute states specifically that the State Board is responsible to, among other things, ensure that career technical education is equally available to students and is “of consistent quality” in all parts of the state.

QUALITY: Part of the minimum standards required by statute require the Secretary to “review and comment on” the qualifications of candidates for positions at CTE centers for whom salary assistance will be requested. The Educator Quality Division at the Agency of Education is charged with this responsibility, sometimes consulting with me regarding whether or not a candidate’s background and experience is sufficient as measured against the established licensing standards.

In 1983, the General Assembly added sections 1533 and 1534, and required the Agency (then Department) of Education to conduct 5 year reviews on the CTE centers and on the programs in each center. These sections of the law refer to reviewing compliance against the applicable statutes and State Board of Education Rules. These reviews are looking backward at historical information.

State Board of Education Rule 2379 addresses the licensed administrative staff that are required in each CTE center; Rule 2380 addresses quality standards for CTE programs and new program approval: “(I) the program has an instructor with the required licensure and competencies to instruct in the program’s core competencies.” In all cases, those involve competencies of both a technical and an academic nature.

FINANCIAL: Rule 2379 establishes an expectation that there is a process for the Agency to weigh in on approving new programs which we do. These reviews are forward looking. Any new programs that a CTE center wishes to run, or any programs that have a significant change in operations or focus, requires a program application. If a program isn’t approved, it doesn’t go in the CTE database; if it’s not in the CTE database the CTE center can’t report data for funding (FTEs). We would not approve a program that did not have a properly qualified teacher; we may issue a provisional approval of a program until the teacher was found and had started the licensing process.

In the event we discovered that a program was being taught by an unlicensed teacher, we would work with that CTE center to develop a plan to come into compliance. In the event compliance was a struggle, we may decide to revoke approval of the program which would prohibit the center from reporting students for CTE funding purposes.

St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute are in unique positions as historical town academies. They are the only two that have state approved CTE programs and are required to serve all high schools in their region; they are the only private schools that receive state funds for salary assistance, for equipment grants, and federal Perkins funds; they are the only private schools eligible to receive program innovation grants, and can receive tuition from other high schools just for CTE. They do not receive supplemental assistance/tuition reduction grants.

In closing I can't help but consider the irony: the focus of our CTE programs, and even our workforce development system, is to help individuals earn industry recognized credentials – certificates, product specific credentials, degrees, and licenses, and I can't help but consider the irony in the testimony on this section of the bill: that the standards to obtain that credential are too high.

If we need to have a broader conversation about the teacher licensing requirements, and solutions to recruiting and retaining qualified people from industry - and I think we do - then let's do that.