



March 26, 2018

Dear Senator Sirotkin, Senator Clarkson, Representative Botzow, Representative Marcotte and Committee Members,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors (VACTED). We have been intently watching the legislative efforts to improve and grow our State workforce. Our Association applauds the work that was put in by the Act 69/S 135 Committee over the summer; first represented in H.852, and now as H.919. In the transition from H.852 to H.919, our Association noticed changes that raise some concerns. At our most recent Association Meeting, we reviewed the current draft bill and have questions/concerns related to the most recent language. Our focus is on the area of the bill most directly connected to Vermont's Career and Technical Education Centers. Specifically, these sections are related to Middle School Programming, Increase Access to CTE, and the Pathways Initiative. Here are our concerns, questions and suggestions by area:

#### Middle School Programming

- Increasing Middle School Programming is great and many CTE Centers do this type of programming now, but with grant resources, mostly Perkins. What are the resources needed to expand this essential programming? Our organization believes that it is essential for middle school students to have as many different types of experiences as possible to shape the development of their Personal Learning Plans. Equity of access issues are created for middle schools that are further away. Can this be funded by FTE out of the Education Fund? Are middle schools required to participate in some way? Can a Middle School Outreach position be a salary assisted position? Many CTE centers are funding this with grant funds; these funds usually have a timeline in which they must be moved to local resources.

#### Increased Access/Opportunity/Pilots

- The pilots could be a good idea to test the efficacies of various scenarios; however, the current governance models have existed for just over a decade. It seems as if enough data should already exist to determine the efficacies of each existing CTE delivery model. VACTED was very thoughtful in the development of the recommendations made in our "White Paper." Our Association did not want to have CTE become part of the Act 46 conversation, but rather focusing on the preparation of the future workforce our State so desperately needs right now.
- The other recommendation in our "White Paper" was a non-competitive funding system for Vermont CTE. We don't believe that Vermont CTE Centers should be placed in an adversarial position, with their sending schools, by the funding system. It looks like the priority of the "Pilots" is now on governance rather than a focus on a non-competitive funding system.

Additionally, the pilot language seems to suggest that the access recommendations won't take place until the pilots have been completed. The need to increase access to CTE programming has been a topic for some time with the Act 51 Committee of a few years ago, and now the Act 69/S 135 committee. We don't believe that the effort to increase the numbers of students accessing Vermont CTE Centers should wait for two more years. The numbers of students entering the "Pipeline" needs to increase as soon as possible. Access to only 30% of the available student population is not going to have the needed impact.

- Increasing access and opportunity for all students in high schools is important. The most recent language seems to cloud the directness suggested in the original Act 69/S135 Committee recommendations. The current language uses the term "Equitable Access". Who determines the definition of "Equitable Access"? The language in H 852 suggested that access is granted when it is part of the student's Personal Learning Plan. This makes the most sense, but Vermont CTE Centers don't have consistent access to the students' PLPs. Whether the definition of the term "Equitable Access" or if it is a requirement that the CTE enrollment must be defined on the students Personal Learning Plan, each has the potential to limit access. We ask for clarity in the language to ensure that students who want to enroll in CTE programming in grades 9 through 12 can access CTE. All students should be able to have a high school experience which balances graduation requirements with career interests, with students being able to access the programming which best serves the student.

#### Pathways Initiative

- The coordination of the Career Pathways Programs of Study is important work. Collaboration with the CTE Centers is an essential part of this. Vermont CTE Centers have been working with Industry Recognized Credentials and Technical Skills related Dual Enrollment for over a decade.
- A concern is the duplication of services by sending schools in technical areas. Here is a recent example:

A student that the regional technical center believed was bound for enrollment in the center's Culinary Arts Program (because of participation in middle school programming), was convinced by the sending high school to do a Work Based Learning Placement rather than going to the regional technical center. While the student will be placed with an employer in the career field they choose, it will be done without the benefit of instruction (safety, employability, and content), credentials, and experience that comes from enrolling in a regional technical center. Not to mention employers will hire an employee with training rather than no training at all. This type of duplication of services or replacement of services is somewhat common occurrence.

- Roles need to be outlined. What should a sending high school "Work Based Learning Coordinator" be doing and what should a regional Career and Technical Education Center's "Cooperative Education Coordinator" be doing to help students? High School students on a Pathway should include a Work Placement experience which aligns with career interests, to ensure that the post-secondary education the student plans on pursuing align with career interests. Rather than pursuing post-secondary without the start of a career plan. A student where CTE enrollment makes the most sense, would benefit from technical instruction leading to Industry Recognized Credentials/Dual Enrollment, with a Cooperative Education Placement, and

Post-Secondary. Students maximize potential without duplication is not the best way to serve our all our young people and our State, and that is why we think those roles should be defined.

#### Adult Technical Education

- In the transition from H852 to H919, there has been language added that states “The Department of Labor shall be responsible for the oversight and coordination of adult career and technical education in the State” and suggests an advisory role for the Agency of Education. This was never the intent of the Act 69/S 135 Committee and we disagree with the idea. Currently, Adult Technical Education is located in each of the CTE Centers and is coordinated regionally by Assistant Directors of Adult Education who are licensed by the Agency of Education. Many of these positions are funded in whole, or part, by the local budget. Therefore, they must be hired through, and supervised by, the CTE center or supervisory union. While the Department of Labor can, and should, suggest workforce education and training programs and classes that are appropriate for a given region, (based upon data and labor market projections) they cannot coordinate a school based program. If it is truly the intent of the legislature to create a career pathways system that expands from middle school to post-secondary education and training, isn't adult CTE a part of that very system? To remove part of the system and have it overseen or coordinated by another department would actually make the system we are trying to create less cohesive. The Career Pathways Initiative seeks to bring all providers into a more coherent system; the intent of the Act 69/S135 committee was to utilize the system that is already in place to enhance workforce education and training. We would urge that Adult Technical Education be viewed in the same way as the rest of the workforce development system with changes to it recommended after a review of the system. Adult Technical Education shouldn't be singled out.

Again, VACTED is very optimistic about possible changes in legislation which will allow Vermont's CTE Centers to have a much larger impact on our states current and future workforce challenges. Efforts have been discussed and proposed in the past, hopefully action will be taken which will fully utilize the potential of Vermont's seventeen Career and Technical Education Centers.

Sincerely,

Legislative Subcommittee for the  
Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors

Sherry Lussier

Scott Farr