



## TESTIMONY TO SENATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE BY BOB FLINT – 4/6/17

Good morning! I'm Bob Flint, Executive Director of Springfield Regional Development Corporation and the immediate Past President of the Regional Development Corporations of Vermont (RDC's of VT). I am speaking on behalf of all of the RDC's of VT.

I have been involved, professionally, with workforce development in the state since my appointment by Gov. Dean to the Consolidated Council for Employment and Training in 1994. That's the public/private group that used to oversee the use of Federal JTPA funds in Vermont. Through that I developed a pilot project in 1996 that attempted to combine academics, work experience and community service.

SRDC has also always considered workforce development to be a core function, since our first Director, Al Moulton, created the regional WIB. Pat Moulton was one of the founders of the Howard Dean Education Center, of which I serve as Chair. I also am the Chair of the River Valley Technical Center School District Board of Directors. RVTC is one of the 3 independent tech center school districts in Vermont.

I'm also the longtime Co-Chair of the River Valley WIB with Lynn Boyle, the area manager of AHS in our region. We have been in those roles together for over 10 years and that's relevant to what I'm going to speak about this morning.

**We appreciate the efforts by the Governor and ACCD in raising attention to the need for better coordination of workforce development programs.** We are core partners with ACCD and they have our trust and support in helping us work with the important businesses in our regions and their economic development needs. We agree with the concept of systemic change and how it can potentially benefit our businesses and their employees.

One of the biggest challenges we see every day, for the continued sustainability of our state's economy and ability for our businesses to survive and grow is developing a sustainable workforce – both in the continued growth in the capabilities of incumbent workers as well as preparing folks to enter the workforce.

I mentioned the relationship with AHS on our regional WIB. Just yesterday, I was at a meeting with our AHS regional manager, the CTE Sup't/Director, our regional WIB Coordinator and the DOL Regional Manager to talk about how we can strengthen our interactions and what we can do to better assist the businesses and employees of our region. While it's a work in progress, it was clear that some better alignment between the Reach Up Program and DOL services can help better prepare people to enter, and be successful, in the workforce. We are looking to integrate a cohort of people with training through RVTC and allow SRDC to work with employers to designate specific employment opportunities. We hope to have more to report on this effort in the near future.

**The point of mentioning this is that workforce development involves a complicated/intersecting group of issues, including socioeconomics, employers, employees and education and training.** Our regional WIB (whose funding has been cut to \$3,500/year) has been successful with our annual job fair, matching employers with prospective employees (the next

event is coming up in a few weeks). But our WIB has also created programs to help employers understand and manage employees with substance issues and, most recently, Adverse Childhood Experiences. Following that latter session, two of the largest employers in our region have embedded “ACE’s awareness” in their HR departments, based on the WIB initiative.

**The RDC’s of Vermont appreciate the Agency’s conceptual proposal and encourage the legislature and Agency to focus on this issue and we are anxious to be a part of that dialogue.**

**But, most importantly, we encourage collaboration with the State Workforce Development Board.** The WDB is meeting on Monday, with the Governor in attendance, and has already been working on key workforce development systems issues. I believe they recently completed their review of the WIOA program and would be a primary stakeholder in overseeing the use of that funding. The Workforce Development Board has a majority, by statute, of representation by the private sector and has representation from all of the key state departments and agencies, including my WIB Co-Chair from our area AHS office.

We have no specific position on the proposal by ACCD to incorporate DOL’s existing workforce development programs into the Agency. The ideas are intriguing and we hope to participate in continued conversations with the Legislature and Administration on this, and other concepts, to improve the state of the workforce in Vermont. The RDC’s also continue to strongly support the Vermont Training Program. It is an essential tool in our work with the employers in our regions. We do encourage the portion of the proposal to have ACCD begin to develop MOU’s with other stakeholder departments/agencies, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board.

**The RDC’ s of Vermont agree that there is an urgent need to focus on workforce development and that greater alignment is needed in the delivery of services and programs that touch workforce development.**

I, like my colleagues, spend a significant amount of time on workforce development, as we know how interrelated it is to the overall world of economic development. **ACCD’s desire to actively engage partners and stakeholders to address workforce development now is both timely and appreciated and we pledge to continue to work with the Agency, the Legislature and the Workforce Development Board.**

As always, thank you for the time and opportunity to speak before the committee.