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Testimony H.919
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St. Johnsbury Academy has been operating as a regional Technical Education Center since 1966. Our high school serves as the regional technical center/comprehensive high school in our service region. St. Johnsbury Academy is a comprehensive high school and due to this model, technical education students are part of the whole school. The technical center is physically intertwined among the science department. Our Technical Education Center has over 40 different courses students can enroll in and 76% of our graduates take at least one Career and Technical Education (CTE) course. The state average for students taking CTE is roughly 39%.

We have a very strong enrollment in CTE at St. Johnsbury Academy. Currently, we have over 130 students signed up to be a part of our Culinary Arts program. Our Woodworking courses have 84 students enrolled for next year and Electricity courses are full. We have the highest number of students enrolled in Human Services in the state. Enrollment has been gradually growing in our Natural Resources Management/Forestry program which we started last year. We continue to seek growth through the gradual development of our field semester which integrates Environment Science, Natural Resource Management/Forestry, and Technical Communications. The Academy has plans to expand the development of Maker Program which is presently at an exploratory stage.

St. Johnsbury Academy offers access to CTE programs through two three-week summer programs. These programs are intended to help students transition from middle school to high school. These programs focus on teamwork through Woodworking, Culinary Arts, Finance, and stewardship to our community.

Our students are well prepared to be successful after high school. Over the past two years, St. Johnsbury Academy has been in the 90th percentile for student placement. This placement counts the number of students in postsecondary, employed, or serving in the military.

The programs at St. Johnsbury Academy are taught by professionals who have made the transition to secondary education. St. Johnsbury Academy employs three certified executive chefs and has three separate commercial kitchens. One kitchen is housed in our restaurant which is located on Main Street. This is a fully operational restaurant which is open Tuesday through Thursday for lunch patrons. The Culinary Arts program

is very well known at the state and national level. Students have earned honors at local and national competitions. One of our students is currently the national champion in Commercial Baking and she competes this summer to be eligible for the World Commercial Baking competition. Students have won 34 medals over the last 15 years in Commercial Baking at the state level and have won three gold medals at nationals.

Other programs are taught by a Master electrician, Licensed Forester, AWS certified welder, and a master craftsman in woodworking. Our Human Services and Business programs are led by two teachers with Masters degrees. Automotive Technology has an instructor who has taught automotive for the past 12 years at our school. Currently, none of these excellent teachers are licensed.

Historically, St. Johnsbury Academy has operated with the five required licenses for Career and Technical Education for administrators which was in line with the State Board of Education. Our CTE instructors have never been licensed. In December, Secretary Holcombe sent a letter to CTE administrators emphasizing that instructors in CTE programs needed to be licensed according to State Board of Education rules. We were unaware that there had been a change in the rule a number of years ago. This rule presents great challenges.

Current licensing procedures and regulations are for potential new teachers without teaching experience. Our teachers do not “fit” into the current procedure. In our efforts to come into compliance, we have filed applications for apprenticeship licenses for our teachers. However, the apprenticeship program requires new teachers to finish a teacher prep program over 4 years at Vermont Technical College. Teachers at St. Johnsbury Academy are experienced teachers. For example, one teacher would have to go back to school to learn to teach who has been in the classroom for 12 years. He is ineligible for peer review because he does not have a bachelor’s degree. He would also have to pass the Praxis exam. The Praxis exam has been challenging statewide for folks. Another example is my electricity teacher, who would have to complete the teacher prep program at VTC. He is a year 1 State Electrical Instructor for Vermont Technical College and teaches students in the state apprenticeship program which is overseen by the Department of Labor. He is ineligible for peer review because he is a product of the state apprenticeship program which requires hours and testing to earn credentialing. He would have to pass the Praxis to be licensed. He is a master electrician.

The current apprenticeship path toward licensure is a good idea, but it has no sense of apprenticing to it. Most apprenticeships, you earn experience and then credentials to practice the skills earned. The current program is centered around completing a teacher prep program. These barriers place us at risk of losing excellent and qualified teachers who for a variety of reasons do not wish to pursue the process at this stage in their careers, be it family, work or the challenges of going back to school after many years. It is challenging enough to find professionals that want to impart their skills to our students. This will make it that much harder to recruit and retain talented professionals and teachers.

A portfolio/school-based measurement program documenting teaching experience through the apprenticeship process would be an improvement to the licensing program. CTE teachers could document their credentials and licenses in their specialized field through a portfolio and become licensed teachers from these industry recognized credentials which are the same credentials their students are trying to earn. We have this type of program at St. Johnsbury Academy, and we would like this to be considered as a substitute to the current licensing process.

Thank you for your consideration.