



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

TO: Chair Marcotte and Members of the House Committee on Commerce and
Economic Development
FROM: Dr. Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Education
DATE: February 12, 2020
RE: Testimony on H. 703, H. 704, and H.707

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Agency of Education (AOE) appreciates the important, sustained work of this body to improve Vermont's workforce development system; we are always happy to work with the Committee on new legislation and ideas. In general, we are supportive of the intent of all three of the H.700 series bills that you are taking testimony on today. In the interest of time, I'll offer brief points framed around our Agency's advice for improved language.

Before highlighting these points for your consideration, I'd like to remind the Committee that AOE has been a strong partner, along with VDOL, ACCD, and other agencies, with the General Assembly in putting forth legislation on workforce development during the past five years. We'd be happy to share our progress on implementing existing legislative initiatives with you at any time.

H.703

VDOL and ADS would be leads on this work, so we will follow their lead on this bill. Should the bill move forward, we suggest adding AOE to the following section, so that we may help shepherd the process with regional CTE centers.

Sec. 1. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROVIDER PORTAL

(b) The Commissioner, in collaboration with the steering committee, other State agencies and departments **including the Agency of Education**, the Vermont State Colleges, workforce training providers, CTE providers, and other interested stakeholders, as necessary, shall:

We would also recommend the Committee hears directly from the Agency of Digital Services regarding any capacity or product/vendor issues with a new state portal.

H.704

Apprenticeship Expansion

AOE is in favor of expanding access to apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs, including better alignment with regional CTE centers, across Vermont. This is an area we have wanted to work on for some time. It is connected to Act 77, WBL, and CTE, and is an extension of our career pathways work.

We see significant potential for expanded apprenticeship opportunities given existing programs and enrollment (see below).

2018-2019 School Year Data

Center Name	Program Area	Enrollments
Green Mountain	Electrical Technology	15
Central Vermont Career Center	Electrical Technology	13
St. Johnsbury Academy	Electrical Technology	22
Stafford Technical Center	Electrical Technology*	15
Essex, Center for Technology Ed	Heating, Ventilation & AC	17
Green Mountain	Heating, Ventilation & AC	9
Central Vermont Career Center	Heating, Ventilation & AC*	11



We would want to be sure, where appropriate, that CTE programs are aligned with VDOL Registered Apprenticeships (e.g., via credentials or dual credit courses). We would be happy to work with VDOL and partners on a statewide agreement between CTE centers and Registered Apprenticeships. Consider, as well, assigning formal public recognition of those CTE programs that are consistently aligned. Title 16, Education, Chapter 39 (Vermont Student Apprenticeship Program) will likely require some updating; AOE is happy to provide language at a future date, particularly around helping to expand apprenticeship opportunities to students who are not enrolled in CTE programs.

Connections between Adult and Postsecondary Education Systems

We are in strong favor of strengthening streamlined pathways for students enrolled in adult education opportunities (either Adult Basic Education or High School Completion Program), including ensuring that all students are made aware of offerings available from secondary, adult, and postsecondary technical education providers. This will improve the likelihood that some of our most vulnerable students have viable, high-skill and high-wage jobs and career pathways that they can secure after completing their high school education. We look forward to working with VDOL, CCV, VTC, and new or existing adult education providers to make this happen. We recently released the RFP for next funding cycle of combined federal and state dollars.

H.707

Emergency Service Providers

This is an interesting idea and AOE certainly understands the critical need for having enough emergency service providers locally and statewide. In fact, few things are perhaps more alarming than not having reliable emergency services available to ensure a community's safety and health. Unfortunately, we suspect the need underlying this bill is a symptom of our larger demographic challenges in the state: a declining youth/young adult population and not enough bodies to fill positions (including volunteer positions, in this case).

The bill as currently written would not be possible to implement, but we are happy to work with the Committee on improved language should you wish to move forward. Specifically, we have some ideas about how we can help to encourage more young people to consider these volunteer opportunities and receive appropriate training. We would also strongly suggest you hear from the Fire Safety Division/Department of Public Safety to hear their perspective.

For instance, the AOE does not have the authority to require that specific programs or courses are provided at the local level, for either general or career technical education. We can, however, encourage the adoption of programs, modules, and training experiences to be incorporated into what CTEs are already offering. As a case in point, collaborative efforts within the past few years have culminated in CTE centers together providing instructor training and offering student programming for NCCER credentials statewide.

AOE can share materials on Firefighting and Emergency Medical Responder certification with high school educators and counselors, encouraging those who work with students to identify emergency services opportunities for dual enrollment and/or work-based learning under Act 77. We can also share this information with middle schools to get even younger students thinking about these possible volunteer opportunities. Opportunities that allow high school students to embed their emergency services training into requirements for high school graduation are aligned with the goals of Act 77, and we would certainly help to foster and encourage such practices.

The Dual Enrollment program is statutorily framed around those postsecondary courses offered at institutions of higher education who agree to accept a much-reduced tuition amount for the student's seat in a course. So, currently, any student who wishes to take Firefighting I or Emergency Medical Responder certification that is offered as part of a Vermont college's course catalog can already do so through dual enrollment. When CTE centers offer postsecondary dual enrollment courses, they are offering them on behalf of the colleges; they do not have the authority to offer postsecondary for-credit courses on their own. What is offered as postsecondary coursework can also be largely affected by external accreditation agencies for institutions, such as NECHE for Vermont.

We would be happy to work on any activities, perhaps group work including VDOL, Vermont state colleges, and DPS, that continue to brainstorm how to solve this critical need.