

Testimony of Eileen Illuzzi to the
Vermont House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
February 6, 2019

Representative Marcotte, Representative O'Sullivan, and members of the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development;

I would like to thank you for asking me to testify regarding the alignment of Career and Technical Education at both the high school and adult level, how the programs are aligned with the workforce needs in the area, and how to build capacity in the workforce development system. My name is Eileen Illuzzi and I am the Chair of the Career Pathways Sub-Committee of the State Workforce Development Board and the Director of the North Country Career Center in Newport.

The Act 189 of 2018 Implementation Report has been submitted to the Committee for review so I will not repeat the accomplishments to date, but rather talk about the larger systems implications of the work. The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB), led by the Chair, the Commission of Labor and the Executive Director have worked diligently towards meeting the goals of Act 189, and SWDB sub-committees continue to implement the approved work-plan.

As chair of the Career Pathways Committee of the SWDB, I have been working with the other members to determine how the career pathway approval process will be implemented. It is important to mention that this committee is not charged with creating the career pathways; this is work that is already underway and is being led by the Agency of Education in collaboration with industry representatives and others. The Career Pathways model is what I consider to be the foundation of a workforce development system. It defines the expectations of both learners and employers of what is needed to be successful in a particular career. The career pathways initiative refers to the required curriculum (program of studies), industry certifications, work-based learning experiences and post-secondary training and experiences (college, vocational training, apprenticeships, etc.) as defined through the Agency of Education for secondary Career and Technical Education. Many people have posed the question "Well, what about non-CTE students and adults?" The Career Pathways model can be the foundation for all students to be successful.

As Pathways are developed and approved, there will be a standard and expectation of what students need to learn to progress in a given field. Pathways will begin in middle school with information and opportunities for students to learn about all careers. Too often students enter into a high school or technical center program without knowing what skills they may need to be successful. At a CTE center, much of their time is spent gaining technical skills, but also trying to catch up on academic coursework that could have been completed earlier had the student only been aware of what they would need later on. While it is important to give younger, middle school students an array of academic proficiencies, it is equally important to discuss career options with them and discover their interests, aptitudes and passions. Exposure to careers through field trips, CTE student presentations and lessons developed jointly by CTE and middle school teachers will give young students a way to experience various professions. It will also give them a realistic idea of what it is like to have a job in these professions. This is one of the intentions of a career pathways model.

As for Adult Technical Education (ATE), there are many examples of great work already being done that Gwen Bailey-Rowe will present to you shortly. ATE works well in the when the programs and classes are aligned to the training expectations that are described in the career pathways model. They are informed by industry, have common curricula and provide opportunities for approved credentials and further learning. It is also crucial that the Assistant Director for Adult Education has the time to make the local connections with employers. These components are all key to a thriving workforce education and training system. The Pathways ensure alignment to industry standards and best practices in education and training, while the local connection to business representatives creates the alignment to workforce needs.

In order to grow and strengthen this system, we need to continue the Career Pathways work and ensure that CTE centers around the state have the capacity to work with local employers to ascertain needs, collaborate with colleagues to create and deliver programs, and plan for the future with other area providers and economic development groups to grow our workforce and economy.