



Patricia A. McDonald

Berlin, Vermont - (802) 371-7080

patmcdonald444@gmail.com

February 14, 2019

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Pat McDonald, President of Campaign for Vermont's Board of Directors and Co-Host and Co-Producer of Vote for Vermont, a public access TV show with a wide audience distribution throughout Vermont. Joining me today is Eric LaMontagne, Executive Director of Campaign for Vermont.

I have had a passion for technical education for as long as I can remember. For 20 years I worked for the world's eighth largest chemical production company, with US headquarters in Ardsley, New York. The parent company is located in Basel, Switzerland. I was in charge of the company's international relocation program. As part of that job I travelled to Switzerland to interview and hire graduates from their technical education school. When I brought these new hires back to the NY campus, they were greeted with open arms as though they were graduates from Harvard or Yale. Their secret: The Board of Directors of the Technical School was comprised of representatives from CIBA-GEIGY Corporation, Hoffman-LaRoche, Nestle's and Sandoz. These Corporations donated heavily to the school and weighed in on the curriculum so that all graduates have the requisite skills to accept positions at any one of these Corporations.

After a few years working for the State I was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Education under then Commissioner David Wolk. I took an immediate interest in technical education and worked closely with Allen Rodgers, then Director of VTC and the Technical School Directors. I brought in various business owners, primarily from the trades to talk to DOE leaders about what they need relative to

skilled workers Sadly it proved difficult to change the imbedded belief that everyone should strive for a college degree and that technical education was more for those who couldn't succeed in public school classes. But there are those who would succeed far better in technical school because they are hands-on learners who respond better to technical education teaching methods. Interesting to note, Allen Rodgers shared with me at the time that high school students came to VTC with insufficient knowledge to begin VTC courses and that several months had to be spent to bring the student up to speed – primarily in mathematics.

When I became Commissioner of Employment and Training and Commissioner of Labor, I again immersed myself in technical education and tried to change the focus on higher education to include technical education as a viable alternative. . There are many benefits in going the tech-ed route: 2 years of schooling, much lower course costs and loan indebtedness, more job opportunities in the student's chosen field, and a very solid salary with benefits.

Having listened to the testimony in Committee last week with Ileen Illuzzi and after having Rep Bill Botsow, Chair of Commerce and Economic Development Committee and Hugh Bradshaw, Employment Services Manager for VocRehab, I realize that the “winds have shifted” relative to technical education, much to my delight. Finally, we at Campaign for Vermont strongly believe the time is right to ensure technical education is given the support and equal attention it deserves to provide all of Vermont's children alternatives while choosing a career that best suits their interests and learning style. There is momentum within the State and a growing interest and appreciation among Vermonters about the important of providing employers with a highly skilled workforce.

Campaign for Vermont recognizes that Vermont's workforce has emerged as a crucial priority and the impact technical education has in supporting a modern, strong, accessible workforce for all Vermont job creators and their workers. Campaign for Vermont was very supportive of the passage of H.919 (Act 189) in 2018. It hopes that the Administration and Legislature through frequent updates from the various entities referenced in the bill that they will keep encouraging completion of the objectives as set forth in the Bill. Campaign for Vermont would

also encourage the Administration, Legislature and the Agency of Education to ensure students and parents are informed about the future benefits of both attending college and/or technical education. Its specific concerns about Act 189:

- Asks a lot of a newly reconstituted panel.
- Puts a large amount of work on the Labor Commissioner.
- Does not look to other states for models for state programs
- Has the state committed enough resources to accomplish this mission?
- Vermont has passed numerous workforce development program over the years. Why is this one different.

Campaign for Vermont has prepared a Resolution “urging public officials and elected leaders to prioritize creating a strong and prosperous workforce”. It has received support from several key business leaders and Vermonters. Campaign for Vermont plans to officially submit its Resolution signed by organizations and concerned citizens at a Press Conference before Town Meeting for the House and Senate consideration. We are sharing the unsigned Resolution in support of this presentation. The Resolution reads as follows:

Resolution urging our public officials and elected leaders to prioritize creating a strong and prosperous workforce.

WHEREAS, A skilled and productive workforce is critical for the economic vitality of Vermont; and

WHEREAS, A thriving business community consists of, and depends on, employers of all sizes; and

WHEREAS, Employers throughout our State are facing an extremely serious and ongoing skills gap due to the lack of qualified workers to fill a wide range of jobs across multiple sectors, today and into the future; and

WHEREAS There are not enough workers at all skill levels to fill current job vacancies; and

WHEREAS, Many Vermonters are unemployed or underemployed and require training to update their skills and find job opportunities that match their interests; and

WHEREAS, Many Vermonters who are unemployed or underemployed face significant barriers to employment and require additional support to overcome these barriers; and

WHEREAS, Vermont youth currently access postsecondary learning at the lowest rates in New England and with significant inequities of access that are correlated with family income and background; and

WHEREAS, Parents, youths, and families are facing a future in which the next generation of workers may not have the same opportunities to prosper as the previous generation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the undersigned concerned citizens and organizations urge that our state and local elected officials and policymakers:

1. Prioritize the creation and support of a modern workforce that is strong, equitable, and accessible.
2. Align Vermont's educational programming, across all levels, with the *demands of a modern workforce while ensuring broad access to these programs.*
3. Invest the resources necessary to fully support Vermont's workforce development programs.
4. Remain dedicated and accountable to implementing the workforce development legislation to which they have committed.

Campaign for Vermont stands ready to assist in any way it can to help send a unified message throughout Vermont that we fully expect our public officials to show nothing less than complete commitment to the efforts they themselves have undertaken, and to a prosperous future for all Vermonter.

Very truly yours.

/Patricia A. McDonald/

Patricia A. McDonald
President, BOD
Campaign for Vermont
voteforvermont@gmail.com
(802) 371-7080

Cc: Eric LaMontagne, Ex Director
Campaign for Vermont