

MEMORANDUM

TO: Hon. Senator Michael Sirotkin, Chair, Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,
Hon. Representative Michael Marcotte, Chair, House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

FROM: Jay Ramsey, Assistant Director, Student Pathways Division

SUBJECT: Modifications to Section 3, H.159 – An act relating to community and economic development and workforce revitalization

DATE: May 7, 2021

In my testimony to both of your committees, I spoke of a need to include adult education and literacy (adult basic and adult secondary education) in Section 3 which requires the Department of Labor to hire a consultant to conduct a study and make recommendations for an integrated post-secondary CTE system. The current language in version 8.0 is limited in focus to adult CTE.

16 V.S.A. § 1531 assigns to the State Board of Education the responsibility to ensure “(3) career technical education is available to adult students” and 16 V.S.A. § 164(13) assigns to the State Board of Education the responsibility for adult education and literacy (AEL).

As the State Board of Education and therefore, the Agency, have responsibility for these two critical areas, and as the Agency and the Department of Labor (DOL) work closely together on workforce preparation programs that benefit both high school students and adults, the Agency is requesting that this be assigned to the entity that is responsible for the work in Section 3, in collaboration with DOL and the other partners identified. We also request that the scope of the section be expanded to include adult education and literacy.

We are requesting the following language adjustments in Section 3 (highlighted below):

Sec. 3. 2019 Acts and Resolves No. 80, Sec. 6 is amended to read:

Sec. 6. ~~POSTSECONDARY CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION SYSTEM~~ **POST-SECONDARY ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS**

(a) Findings; purpose.

(1) Findings. The General Assembly finds:

(A) Like many rural states, Vermont faces demographic realities that have resulted in an historically low unemployment rate and created obstacles for employers that seek to hire and retain enough fully trained employees.

(B) Notwithstanding this high employer demand, due to rapidly changing technology and evolving business needs, potential employees may lack the particular skills and training necessary to qualify for available jobs.

(C) There are over 32,000 Vermonters who do not have a high school diploma and that those individuals are disproportionately historically marginalized groups, and that these individuals, on average, earn \$9,620 less per year than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent.

(D) According to the U. S. Department of Education, 54% of U. S. adults lack proficiency in literacy, reading below the equivalent of a 6th grade level, and that those adults earn \$15,000 less, on average, than adults reading at a 6th grade level or above.

(E) In that same study, if all U. S. adults achieved the equivalent of at least 6th grade literacy proficiency it would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion for the country.

(F) Vermont could realize significant economic gains by creating coherence and alignment through a unified service-delivery system that serves adults in attaining the academic, career, and technical skills necessary to enter and advance in the workplace and to access additional post-secondary opportunities.

(G) The Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont determined, in its final report, that a study of adult CTE and adult education and literacy would be necessary to create “a more coherent plan for organizing and utilizing the capacities of the various entities involved.”

(H) In order to assist employers and employees in matching demand to requisite skills, Vermont has a broad diversity of postsecondary workforce education and training programs offered by multiple providers, including programs administered or funded by State government, educational institutions, and business-lead groups such as the Vermont Talent Pipeline Management Project. The State should continue to work closely with these providers to identify and meet the needs of employers and employees.

(b) Adult Basic and Adult Secondary Education, and Postsecondary CTE System.

(1) The Agency of Education ~~Department of Labor~~, in ~~collaboration~~ **consultation** with the ~~Agency of Education~~, Department of Labor, the Vermont State Colleges, and the Vermont Adult Technical Education Association, **and two representatives from entities who serve adult basic and adult secondary populations**, ~~and any~~ shall:

(A) ~~consultant the Department hires for that purpose~~, issue a request for proposals and hire a **contracted** consultant on or before September 1, 2022; and

(B) shall ~~consider and~~ report to the General Assembly on the design, implementation, and costs of an integrated **and coherent adult basic education, adult secondary education, and** postsecondary career and technical education system that achieves the results specified in subdivision (a)(2) of this section.

(2) In performing their work, the ~~Department~~ **Agency**, ~~stakeholders~~ **partners**, and ~~any~~ the consultant shall conduct a broad-based stakeholder engagement process to solicit input from interested parties, and State agencies and departments shall provide necessary information and assistance within their relative areas of expertise.

(c) Reporting. The ~~Department of Labor~~ **Agency** shall report to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development, ~~and to the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs,~~ **and the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education** concerning the implementation of this section as follows:

- (1) on or before April 15, 2022, a status update addressing the progress on designing the request for proposals and the stakeholder engagement process;
- (2) on or before January 15, 2023, a preliminary report on the status of its work as of that date; and
- (3) on or before December 15, 2023, a final report with any recommendations for legislative action.

(d) In performing its work to create an integrated **adult basic education, adult secondary education, and** postsecondary career and technical education system, the ~~Department~~ **Agency** shall recognize issues faced by persons **who would benefit from adult basic or adult secondary education or** with **other** historical barriers to employment, who are underrepresented in the workforce, including persons who have faced discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, refugee status, and national origin; persons in recovery; persons with a history of incarceration; and persons with disabilities.

Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION

The Department of Labor shall allocate not more than **\$75,000** from the amounts available in the Workforce Expansion Fund to implement Sec. 3 of this act.

The Agency of Education shall allocate not more than \$25,000 from the amounts available in the General Fund for Tech Ed Adult Formula to supplement funds from the Department of labor to implement Sec. 3 of this act.