

House Commerce and Economic Development Committee testimony

February 2, 2022

Honorable Committee Members:

My name is Flor Diaz Smith my preferred pronouns are she/ella. I am the chair of the Washington Central Unified Union District. I am an appointed representative from our district to the Central Vermont Career Center Advisory Board, we are one of the six sending districts. Since April of 2021 I have been the chair the Study Committee for the Career Center Governance Change. This change will help us in the long term to make sure that we are better positioned to serve the needs of all our students. I am committed to this work and I thank you for your interest in hearing from all different stake holders today.

This Pandemic has brought into focus public attention to children and Education. We should continue to take advantage of this opportunity and do something to re-design and prioritize community and common good and let that be the basic focus for the wellbeing of all our children. Meeting children's needs inside and outside of school.

Career and Technical Education is usually an after thought and we have been reminded the past couple of years that it is a critical part of high-quality Pre-K-12 education, and yesterday, when Governor Scott declared February CTE month. This hands-on skills-based curriculum should be an integral part of the middle school and high school experience. Act 77 as you know encourages Flexible Pathways to secondary school completion. Career and Technical Education is outlined as one of the opportunities for secondary students as a pathway to graduation. (Career exploration, work -based learning or a path to hire education)

We need to invest more in Career education so we can continue to empower kids to work for industry or pursue a postsecondary education. Before we are able to make big changes to continue to best meet the needs of the work force in our state, we need to make some changes in the rules and regulations to make sure we can serve kids starting in middle school. To better serve our kids we also need to have more capacity, we do not have the amount of space needed to serve all our kids. Without an infrastructure investment, we won't be able to afford to build or renovate the space necessary to serve all students. For years we have also talked about ways to stop competing for funding with our sending districts local high schools.

We are willing to role our sleeves and work with you on the best ways to meet the immediate and long term of the workforce in Vermont but we need your support in the areas that I just listed.

Respectfully,

Flor Diaz Smith

Washington Central Unified Union School District Board Chair  
VSBA Vice President and Central Vermont Region Representative  
Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council Member