February 23, 2022
Testimony Related to H. 377
House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

Good morning. My name is Scott Cheney and I am the CEO of Credential Engine and I am pleased to provide testimony related to and in support of H. 377 and its call to expand and codify credential transparency in Vermont.

Credential Engine's most recent report on the number of credentials—diplomas, certificates, apprenticeships, certifications, licenses, degrees of all types and levels— available in the United States found nearly 1,000,000 unique credentials available across the country. In Vermont there are approximately 2,000 credentials offered by state-based institutions, including almost 1,000 degrees, 250 certificates, 350 apprenticeships, 125 licenses, and high school diplomas. On top of these options, state residents can and do access hundreds of thousands of national certifications, online certificate and degree programs, and work-based occupational badges, and more.

With so many credentials in the market, it's hard to find reliable, comparable, and valuable information about them. And without widespread adoption of standards for describing and evaluating them—people get lost and lose out on opportunities, employers struggle to find people with the exact skills needed, educators too often offer programs that are misaligned with workplace needs, and policymakers are unsure which credentials offer actual value in the marketplace and which should be funded and expanded.

Credential transparency ensures that essential information about all credentials is available as open, linked, interoperable data on the web. Importantly, I will note that this work does not touch or impact any personally identifiable information (PII) about the holders of such credentials. What can be made open, searchable, comparable and navigable is information about providers of credentials, the credentials and their competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities taught), quality indicators, outcome information, costs, assessments, transfer value, pathways, and links to actual job skills. And more. Using proven standards, technologies, and a linked open data network, we support a common, open database—or Registry—of essential information about credentials that everyone can access for timely and trusted information to help them make their most informed decisions.

The availability of this rich, open information on the web fuels the creation of vital services and tools, like MyFutureVT, that allow students, workers, employers, and educators to compare credentials and choose the best option. And it will allow the state to have better insights into the entire landscape of education and training both within the

state and across state lines, the value of those credentials, their links to jobs, and their quality for determinations about eligibility for state and federal funds.

With this legislation the State builds on, formalizes, and solidifies initial work already underway. Advance Vermont has been working to establish a foundation for credential transparency, working to publish information about credentials from public and private two and four-year institutions and CTE centers. This early work has been vital because oversight and delivery of credentials is so highly decentralized in every state, touching on K-12, CTE, higher education, apprenticeships, state occupational licenses, the workforce system, non-profits, private employers, and more. As an organization that collaborates across these agencies and institutions, Advance Vermont has a unique ability to facilitate coordination across these many silos to help build a common state Registry of all credentials.

Moving ahead this work needs the support, coordination, and leadership of both public and private entities in the state, both to collect and make public these essential data, but also to ensure that a range of improved screening, assessment, and navigation and guidance tools and services are developed that use modern data formats to best serve students, workers, employers, educators, and policymakers. Public-private approaches to this work are in effect in states like California, Texas, Kansas and Indiana.

Currently 27 states and regions have committed to credential transparency goals and are working collaboratively across different agencies to ensure that all essential data about credential providers, credentials and their competencies are made available on the open web as linked, open, interoperable data. And more states are joining; we anticipate that over 35 states and regions will be committed by the end of 2022. Credential transparency is rightly being understood as an essential element of a wide range of education and workforce goals. States are pursuing credential transparency for a wide number of reasons, including:
- to improve insights into the credential marketplace in their state,
- to improve their ability to make determinations about quality, value, and eligibility across all credentials,
- to make available better training finder tools for students and job seekers,
- to support next-generation navigation and pathway tools and services,
- to ensure more equitable access to information about credentials, quality, pathways and outcomes for all users,
- to help employers better understand the competencies embedded in credentials and how they align with skill requirements, and
- to support the development of secure, self-sovereign, interoperable learning and employment records, among other uses.

Credential Engine is a non-profit organization established by the Lumina Foundation and others to lead the work of credential transparency and democratizing data about
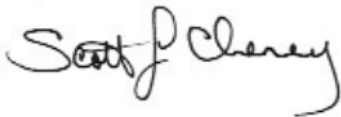
educational and occupational credentials to support a more effective, efficient, equitable market, and to ensure open information is available to everyone, any time, and anywhere.

We work closely with both the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) to support the states in their region on this work. And we partner with the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, Education Commission of the States, Council of Chief State School Officers, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, and the Data Quality Campaign to support states' adoption of policy and practice.

In addition, both the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education have taken critical steps by requiring credential transparency as part of some or all agency grant opportunities. And several major foundations will soon embed credential transparency goals in their grantmaking.

At a time when so many people and employers are trying to make the right decisions about upskilling, reskilling, and rehiring, the residents of Vermont deserve to have full, accurate, and beneficial information about the credentials available to them. Enacting credential transparency-related policy not only signals the state's priorities but also helps ensure that the work endures. We applaud Vermont for taking this important step in service to its constituents.

Respectfully,

Scott Cheney
CEO, Credential Engine, Inc.

Mission
Credential Engine is a non-profit whose mission is to map the credential landscape with clear and consistent information, fueling the creation of resources that empower people to find the pathways that are best for them.

Vision
We envision a future where millions of people worldwide have access to information about credentials that opens their eyes to the full range of opportunities for learning, advancement, and meaningful careers.