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RE: H377

Testimony of:

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Informal Remarks

If my prepared testimony seems a little stiff, I have to be fully transparent. I did not practice. But, I think hearing WHY will give you a great understanding of what Career Educators, Career Navigators like myself do and why the work of AdvanceVermont and the MyFutureVT portal is important.

I started my morning today with:

- Transportation of Culinary student her **Co-op at Neighborly Farms** where they make organic cheese
- Assisted a Health Careers student, with aspirations of being an EMT, with the paperwork to start her **Co-op at White River Valley Ambulance** tomorrow and how to make a good first impression
- Zoom **Informational Interview** with Vermont Works for Women, our Electrical Program, our Advanced Manufacturing Program, and BETA Technologies, the Burlington-based aerospace manufacturer developing electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft.
- 2nd Health Careers student. Worked to develop questions to ask during her **Job Shadow with an Occupational Therapist** this morning
- 3rd Health Careers student. Prepared for her **Interview** this coming Friday in hopes of being accepted into **Gifford Medical Center's 14-week Medical Assistant Training Program**
- Long conversation with an Electrical Student that is on **Co-op at Brookfield Service**, a Northfield electrical generator company, who has been offered a full-time position after graduation...BUT is now considering an **Apprenticeship in Plumbing** instead.

Helping to inform and support Informational Interviews, Job Shadows, Co-ops, Education and Training Pathways, Apprenticeships. That is the career education work that can be supported by this bill.

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Formal Remarks

Thank you for this opportunity. Providing a seat at the table for career educators like myself is important and very much appreciated. I hope to also provide a voice for the students and young adults who stand to most benefit from this bill.

Currently, I work in Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the Randolph Technical Career Center where my role is focused on career education and navigating pathways to help students explore Vermont's high-pay, high-demand careers and the education needed to be successful.

This career education happens through one-on-one conversations, interest inventories and aptitude tests, guest speaker events and informational interviews, job shadows, internships, and work-based learning placements.

My role here also includes being the Adult Education Coordinator where our primary focus is on a partnership with the Central Vermont Medical Center to train the next generation of their LNAs.

I've also twice served as Chair of the Vermont Cooperative Educators Association (VCEA). This organization represents all Work Based Learning Coordinators from every CTE Center in Vermont.

Additionally, I am a member of the Vermont Adult Career & Technical Education Association (VACTEA) where I sit on the Strategic Partnerships Committee.

This collective set of experiences coupled with my work designing an external learning and internship program as a Rowland Fellow while I was at Otter Valley Union High School gives me a unique perspective on the need for the work of Advance Vermont and the potential of MyFutureVT to help traditional high school students, students in our CTE Centers, and adult learners in understanding pathways to in-demand careers and educational opportunities.

But, I am not alone in helping Vermonters take the next step in their education and career journeys. In addition to high school counselors, CTE counselors, and Adult CTE providers, there are organizations like VSAC, Vermont Works for Women, VocRehab, the Vermont State Colleges, and many more doing this work.

While it is both encouraging and validating that so many understand the importance of career education and training, it feels this bill also provides a unique opportunity to, as stated, "enhance collaboration and capacity."

There is a strong need for an organization like Advance Vermont to lead that collaboration. And, they have already demonstrated through the creation of the MyFutureVT portal that they have the competence and capacity to bring these organizations together to develop actionable tools that can be used by career "navigators" across Vermont.

I've worked with Tom Cheney and Advance Vermont for many years and have been continually impressed with the vision and leadership shown. In particular, however, it was Advance Vermont's efforts in creating the MyFutureVT portal that most ensures that this is the organization to facilitate the collaborative efforts between those of us who are actually doing the work of helping current students, supporting folks reentering the workforce, and those looking to further the economic stability and well-being of themselves and their families.

Another truth. I'm a bit of a data nerd. With that, I'd like to take a moment and share some research I have come across that supports the need for the ongoing work of Advance Vermont and the use of the MyFutureVT portal.

The bill mentions a need to address "gender-based discrimination." Researchers have found that "...women who received their first job after high school through school-assisted job placement had on average 21% higher wages three years after high school than women who did not."

Having a tool like this that raises awareness of career and education pathways is a critical piece to opening gender-based nontraditional pathways. Additionally, research has shown "wage premiums of up to 18% being linked to school-mediated employer engagement" for all young adults.

In this same thread, a study done by the DC Policy Center has shown that those "students with Associate's degrees and certifications who acquired career assets (That includes things such as exposure to career options, career counseling, and postsecondary planning) have earnings outcomes on par with students who have Bachelor's degrees." The tools within MyFutureVT are absolutely those that can help individuals find the right fit, the right program, and the right career path.

In my role I not only work with career seekers, but career providers as well. In anticipation of the question, "What are the potential benefits for employers in supporting the MyFutureVT portal?" I'd share that the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that the five-year retention rate of those hired with internal internship experience is higher than the one-year retention rate of hires with no internship experience. MyFutureVT has built-in paths to help explore job shadows, informational interviews, and internships as part of helping students and adults connect with employers.

I think particularly important to this committee, and rightly so, is achieving the State goal of 70% of working-age Vermonters holding a credential of value by 2025. The most current estimate is, however, is that we as a State are only at 53%. How can we move the needle on this? Here is how.

Career education tools like those available on the MyFutureVT portal can support those "Vermonters who are historically underserved by the education and workforce systems." A study of over 4,000 high school students found that career education decreased the 4-year college enrollment gap between high- and low-income students by 92% and the graduation gap by 74%. Career Education is a powerful tool.

The data is overwhelming, through the MyFutureVT portal, career Navigators such as myself have the potential to greatly improve the economic and social well-being of Vermonters while also providing employers with the trained workforce they need to support sustainable local communities.

Advance Vermont has shown through the buildout of the MyFutureVT portal its ability to "create and maintain public-facing communications and resources to increase awareness of the value of postsecondary education and training."

It has also shown that it can bring together "members of the education, employer, nonprofit communities, and State agencies to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration." And, it is uniquely positioned to "support efforts to coordinate and implement regional attainment initiatives" of all career education providers in Vermont.

It is my hope that you accept this testimony as an unequivocally strong support of H. 377.