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## T E S T I M O N Y

To: House Committee on Education  
From: Sarah Buxton, Director of Workforce Development, Department of Labor  
Date: February 16, 2022  
Subject: H.377

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The Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL), Agency of Education (AOE), and the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is assigned responsibilities at the State and Federal level. The coordination of work between the Department/Agency, Board, and federally and state funded programs has been an area of focus of the legislature since 2012. A tremendous amount of work has been done in the last five years to coordinate service, align activities and initiatives, and begin implementing systems changes.

Key areas of shared responsibility – related to H.377 – include funding, development, monitoring, and publication of education and training opportunities, setting and utilizing shared state-level performance metrics, defining, promoting, and linking industry recognized credentials and credentials of value, and ensuring that all systems and services are accessible to customers.

In 2018, the legislature acknowledged the key role that VDOL, AOE, and VR play in helping Vermonters earn credentials. It also recognized that the complicated federal and state programs we oversee make it difficult to develop and maintain a system for displaying training and credential information and measuring credential attainment. It parsed and prioritized some of these tasks, and we ask you to allow the pathway for progress to remain uninterrupted. Over the last few years, VDOL, AOE, and VR have participated in US DOL training cohort on credentialing – receiving technical assistance and beginning the work of establishing a state system of recognizing and promoting credentials. We have also led a task force with public and private stakeholders, identifying and recommending to the SWDB on how we might develop a process, overseen by the SWDB, to stand up this system. At the same time, VDOL has included recommendations from AdvanceVT and Credential Engine in our RFI and RFP to select a vendor who would create a state-backed system to displaying training and credential



information. Bidding closed on January 28, 2022, and we are currently reviewing bids with this requirement in mind.

We do not support granting authority or responsibility of another entity in this incredibly complicated work. The public-private partnership embodied by the SWDB represents the appropriate forum for stakeholder engagement, metric development, accountability, and linking across systems. It also allows us to check the prioritization of this work – and account for progress made – to a body that share responsibility in effective functioning and coordination of the overall labor force and employment system of the state.

If there is outside work to be done, that would add value, it is the continual publication and amplification of training opportunities available in the state and the value of earning a post-secondary credential in the workplace.

### **Statutory Responsibilities:**

In 10 VSA 540 the Legislature has named the Commissioner (Department) of Labor as “the leader of workforce education and training in the State” and assigns “the authority and responsibility for the coordination of workforce education and training within State government.” The Department of Labor, is tasked with carrying out the following:

- Establishing an integrated system of workforce education and training for Vermont;
- **Creating and maintaining an inventory of all existing workforce education and training programs and activities in the State;**
- Using data to ensure that State workforce education and training activities are aligned with the needs of the available workforce, the current and future job opportunities in the State, and the specific credentials needed to achieve employment in those jobs;
- **Developing a State plan, as required by federal law, to ensure that workforce education and training programs and activities in the State serve Vermont citizens and businesses to the maximum extent possible;**
- **Coordinating public and private workforce programs to ensure that information is easily accessible to students, employees, and employers, and that all information and necessary counseling is available through one contact.**
- Facilitating effective communication between the business community and public and private educational institutions,
- **Coordinating intentional outreach and connections between students graduating from Vermont's colleges and universities and employment opportunities in Vermont.**
- **Ensuring coordination and nonduplication of workforce education and training activities; and**
- With the assistance of the Secretaries of Commerce and Community Development, of Human Services, of Education, of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and of Transportation



and of the Commissioner of Public Safety, develop and implement a coordinated system to recruit, relocate, and train workers to ensure the labor force needs of Vermont's businesses are met.

Under federal law, 20 CFR §675 requires that VDOL implement Title I of WIOA to:

- Increase access to, and opportunities for individuals to receive, the employment, education, training, and support services necessary to succeed in the labor market, with a particular focus on those individuals with disabilities or other barriers to employment including out of school youth with the goal of improving their outcomes;
- **Streamline service delivery across multiple programs by requiring colocation, coordination, and integration of activities and information to make the system understandable and accessible for individuals, including individuals with disabilities and those with other barriers to employment, and businesses.**
- **Support the alignment of the workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system at the Federal, State, and local and regional levels;**
- **Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts by promoting the use of industry and sector partnerships, career pathways, and regional service delivery strategies in order to both provide America's workers with the skills and credentials that will enable them to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages, and to provide America's employers with the skilled workers the employers need to succeed in a global economy;**
- Promote accountability using core indicators of performance measured across all WIOA authorized programs, sanctions, and high quality evaluations to improve the structure and delivery of services through the workforce development system to address and improve the employment and skill needs of workers, job seekers, and employers; and
- **Provide workforce development activities through statewide and local workforce development systems to increase employment, retention and earnings of participants and to increase industry-recognized postsecondary credential attainment to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet skill requirements of employers, and enhance productivity and competitiveness of the nation.**

#### 10 VSA § 541a. State Workforce Development Board

The State Workforce Development Board is charged with assisting the Governor in the execution of his or her duties under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and to assist the Commissioner of Labor as specified in section 540. Additionally, the SWDB shall:



- conduct an ongoing public engagement process throughout the State that brings together employers and potential employees, including students, the unemployed, and incumbent employees seeking further training, to provide feedback and information concerning their workforce education and training needs; and
- **review and approve State-endorsed Career Pathways that reflect a shared vision across multiple sectors and agencies for improving employment outcomes, meeting employers' and workers' needs, and leveraging available State and federal funding; and**
- publicize the State-endorsed Career Pathways, including on websites managed by the Agency of Education, Department of Labor, and Department of Economic Development.

**The Board shall have the authority to approve State-endorsed and industry-recognized credentials and certificates, excluding high school diplomas and postsecondary academic degrees, that are aligned with the Career Pathways.**

Membership. The Board shall consist of the Governor and the following members who are appointed by the Governor in conformance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and who serve at his or her pleasure, unless otherwise indicated:

- (1) the Commissioner of Labor;
- (2) two members of the Vermont House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- (3) two members of the Vermont Senate appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees;
- (4) the President of the University of Vermont;
- (5) the Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges;
- (6) the President of the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation;
- (7) a representative of an independent Vermont college or university;
- (8) a director of a regional technical center;
- (9) a principal of a Vermont high school;
- (10) two representatives of labor organizations who have been nominated by a State labor federation;
- (11) two representatives of individuals and organizations who have experience with respect to youth activities, as defined in 29 U.S.C. § 3102(71);
- (12) two representatives of individuals and organizations who have experience in the delivery of workforce investment activities, as defined in 29 U.S.C. § 3102(68);
- (13) the lead State agency officials with responsibility for the programs and activities carried out by one-stop partners, as described in 29 U.S.C. § 3151(b), or



if no official has that responsibility, representatives in the State with responsibility relating to these programs and activities;

- (14) the Commissioner of Economic Development;
- (15) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development;
- (16) the Secretary of Human Services;
- (17) the Secretary of Education;
- (18) two individuals who have experience in, and can speak for, the training needs of underemployed and unemployed Vermonters; and
- (19) a number of appointees sufficient to constitute a majority of the Board who:
  - (A) are owners, chief executives, or operating officers of businesses, and other business executives or employers with optimum policymaking or hiring authority;
  - (B) represent businesses with employment opportunities that reflect in-demand sectors and employment opportunities in the State; and
  - (C) are appointed from among individuals nominated by State business organizations and business trade associations.

#### **Additional Background:**

Vermont has over twenty federal funding streams that administer workforce development programs that are required to participate in a “one-stop delivery system.” In 20 CFR § 678 the “one-stop delivery system brings together workforce development, educational, and other human resource services in a seamless customer-focused service delivery network that enhances access to the programs’ services and improves long-term employment outcomes for individuals receiving assistance. One-stop partners administer separately funded programs as a set of integrated streamlined services to customers.”

Title I of WIOA assigns responsibilities at the “State and Federal level to ensure the creation and maintenance of a one-stop delivery system that enhances the range and quality of education and workforce development services that employers and individual customers can access.” Vermont submits a comprehensive four-year plan that is updated every two years to fulfill these responsibilities. We enter into a massive MOU with over twenty state and local partner programs that describe how services to jobseekers and employers are provided, how we align, share data, coordinate resources, and measure performance.

