

Dear Representative/Senator,

I am writing to you because COVID-19 has had a significant and unique impact on the career and technical education centers in Vermont. As a friend and supporter of Stafford Technical Center, I wanted to share with you the ways in which COVID has impacted centers across the State of Vermont., not just Stafford.

Outreach and Recruitment – The window of what we in CTE call “recruitment season” runs from December through April. Many CTE centers were unable to finish recruitment efforts in the spring of 2020. I estimate that we will not be able to be fully back on track until March of 2025, with the first normal “recruitment season” being in the spring of 2022.

Student Scheduling – Scheduling of high school students for the upcoming school year typically happens in the late spring. This was, in some situations, put off until August. Many students in high school chose to not follow through on their plans to enroll in a CTE program due to apprehension about COVID-19 and going to a school where students would be mixing with students from multiple communities served by the technical center.

Alignment of Regional Schedules - A lack of coordination of daily school schedules has impacted the students’ abilities to take a CTE program and their sending school classes. Additionally, sending districts may need to, or choose to, go to remote instruction when the CTE center is open for in-person instruction or vice versa. This lack of coordination has led to frustration for the students and their families. Leading to higher than normal student attrition rates

Competitive Funding System – We briefly touched on the current competitive in nature funding system and that COVID-19 compounded a funding system where the money follows the student and will continue to exacerbate the situation six-semester/three-years after we are fully clear of the pandemic.

To maintain the continuity of education for CTE students a stabilization of funding is quickly needed. CTE centers operate within very tight budget constraints; personnel are usually the way to reduce expenses. This is particularly worrisome given the workforce need in Vermont. To stabilize the funding, a solution would be to create a temporary “hold harmless provision” for FTEs. This would be for the timeframe of July 2020 through June 2025 which would be held at a level no lower than the March 15, 2020 FTE counts. Centers that have realized increases in student FTE counts would be able to use those higher FTEs to determine funding; but again, the levels would go no lower than March 25, 2020. Hopefully, we can move to a funding model which does not place us in competition with the high schools we serve and center equity for all students.

Again, I appreciate your thoughtful time and consideration.

Regards,

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