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January 11, 2022

To: House Committee on Appropriations
From: House Committee on Education
RE: FY22 BAA

The House Education Committee offers the following comments on education-related requests for funding and language changes for the Budget Adjustment Act.

Reversions: The Agency presented a list of reversions which met with no objection.

Career and Tech Education (CTE):

- The AOE requested \$1.5 million be drawn from the Education Fund to address general COVID-related challenges and enrollment loss in the 17 regional CTEs.
- In addition, the Committee received a separate request of \$515,746.30 from the state's three independently governed public CTEs: River Valley Tech Center, Southwest Technical Center and Hannaford Center. (testimony Scott Farr, 1/5/22)

These requests reflect the complex relation between our CTEs and Local Education Agencies (LEA). In Vermont, the LEAs are our supervisory unions and districts. Vermont CTE's did not have direct access to ESSER funds because they were either 1) independently governed and did not fit the definition of LEA or 2) they were dependent on the host LEA sharing ESSER funds. Some did and some did not. The Administration requested the \$1.5 million be distributed to all CTEs for an unspecified percentage to support COVID-related learning loss and related issues due to their difficulty accessing ESSER funds.

The House Education Committee supports the use of \$1.5 million to support our CTEs, however we recommend the first \$515,746.30 be distributed to the 3 independently governed public CTEs with the remainder distributed to the remaining 14 public CTEs. We also ask that HAC search for other federal fund to address these vital centers that prepare our future workforce. We also suggest the

HAC ask the AOE for a more detailed description of how the remaining CTE money would be used and distributed.

Adult Education and Literacy

- \$350,000 for Adult Learning and Literacy providers

The four Adult Learning and Literacy providers have requested \$350,000 to offset COVID-related costs and funding issues. These costs are outlined in a memo from Hal Cohen on behalf of the four providers on January 7, 2022.

The providers are not eligible for pre-K-12 federal COVID funding but have had significant COVID-related costs, such as those associated with remote instruction and safe in-person practices, as well as funding losses due to enrollment drops related to COVID. The committee supports this request as these agencies have largely been left out of other programs and support. As adult education is not funded through the Education Fund, support will need to be found elsewhere in the BAA.

Windsor Central Supervisory Union:

- \$436,218.22 CRF for WCSU

The HEC also heard a request from the Windsor Central Supervisory Union for \$436,217.22 CRF dollars due to them and accounted for at AOE. Due to a change in business managers and superintendents, the district had met the requirements but did not meet the paperwork deadline. The AOE has kept this money on the books and supports this CRF funding as reimbursement for costs associated with the early days of the pandemic. The committee also supports this request.

Higher Education:

Representative Fagan presented a series of BAA requests for higher education programs. The HEC supports these requests, which largely represent carry-forward money or ARPA-funded successful initiatives.

Regarding the Critical Occupations Scholarships, we suggest including language in the FY 23 budget requiring a review of this program in meeting its goals, especially filling jobs in Vermont in the critical occupations with graduates who took advantage of this program. It does not have a Vermont work requirement to qualify. We suggest additional language providing for a regular review of the listed qualifying programs to make sure they are still considered the most “critical” for the state.

Recent AOE Requests:

On Tuesday afternoon, January 11, the AOE presented three further BAA requests, which the committee supports. These requests are outlined in testimony on the HEC web site from AOE federal funds expert Jill Briggs Campbell:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/WorkGroups/House%20Education/FY%202022%20Budget%20Adjustment%20Act/W~Jill%20Briggs%20Campbell%20~Agency%20of%20Education%20Supplemental%20Budget%20Adjustment%20Act~1-11-2022.pdf>

- CTE indoor air quality: The first request amends Act 9 to include CTEs in the Indoor Air Quality Program. This was seen as oversight that needed to be corrected since CTEs are school buildings.
- Vaccine Incentive Program: requests \$200,000 in ARPA SFRF funds for extending the Vaccine Incentive Program to recognized and approved independent schools
- ESSER set-aside funds in Act 74: Changes language in order to maximize federal funding deadlines for previously approved and funded programs to support remote learning.

Shared School District Data Management System:

We ask that the attached language be added to the BAA to extend the statewide adoption of eFinancePlus.

Although the Agency worked with the provider over the summer and fall, we understand a statewide system is not ready to move into the final stages of full state implementation and could create hardship for school districts already overwhelmed with pandemic impact. We expect to hear from a work group next week on a plan to successfully implement a shared data management system.

We appreciate the time and energy the HAC is spending to include the committees of jurisdiction. Please feel free to send any follow-up questions to the committee.

Representative Kathryn Webb
Chair, House Education Committee