

Greetings Vermont Senate Education Committee.

My name is Brian Emerson and I am the Director of River Bend Career and Technical Center in Bradford Vermont. We are a small Center with an annual budget of just over \$2,000,000. Because of the impact of COVID, our Center saw a decline in enrollment of approximately 13-17 students which equates to about \$200,000 in lost revenue. Because River Bend operates on a half day schedule, this means students spend part of their days at their home-sending high schools. I received many phone calls in the fall from parents letting me know that because of concerns of exposure to the virus, they were going to have their daughter or son only attend one school and of course they were choosing their high schools so they could graduate. Who can fault them for this logic. Many of the sending high schools also struggled with creative remote schedules and adding CTE into the mix further complicated their schedules which was another common complaint we received from parents and students. All in all, River Bend, along with many other Tech. Centers in the state took quite a hit on enrollment.

I also have grave concerns over next year's enrollment. Whereas normally all five of our sending schools send a large number of students to visit and experience first hand CTE learning in-person, this year, we have been forced to create online virtual visits. The majority of students that decide to pursue a CTE experience tend to prefer hands-on activities and learning. In our normal recruitment students move around and experience learning by doing and engaging in hands-on activities. Often students make the decision to attend the Tech. Center soon after the normal in-person recruitment activities. We've already seen that after the current on-line virtual recruitment, students are not as excited. This is worrying.

I received a phone call from a local Master Plumber and he was looking for a young apprentice. He will pay a good wage and pay for the apprentice's education. He has called twice and both times I had to tell him that we're keeping his request in mind but right now we just can't find the right student. When I told him how we only had 8 students in our Construction Program he was appalled! He mentioned to me that he's done advertising and taking on any new customers because he is so busy. This is a common story from all of the Tech. Centers in Vermont. CTE in Vermont is not keeping up with the employment demands because CTE is not receiving enough students.

In closing, if my Tech. Center does not receive more financial help, I could be forced to cut programs. Given the prevailing data coming out of the Department of Labor and my own local anecdotal information, we need to be expanding CTE more, not cutting programs. You will hear from Director/Superintendent Scott Farr two financial proposals. The first I believe will help put Vermont on the path to maintain our Tech. Centers and not force them to cut programming because of COVID. The second I believe will help take down some barriers to expanding CTE and also engage in a more equitable distribution of CTE funding.

Thank You

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