

# BURLINGTON TECHNICAL CENTER

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March 26, 2021

Testimony VT Legislature

Good Moring. I am Jason Gingold, Director of the Burlington Technical Center. We serve 12 different high schools, 6 different counties and over 280 students, 49% of our students receive free and reduced meals, 7% of our students are English Language learners, and 19% are on a service plan, at times we are working with some of the most vulnerable populations.

As part of the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors I would like to explain why the Career centers need a hold harmless provision as Scott Farr and Dana Peterson will testify to as well and a call to action to change the Career Education funding system and why Burlington Technical Center needs your support for construction costs.

I'd like to refresh your memory from a 2016 speech that then Lt. Governor Scott was giving as he ran for his current office. And I am paraphrasing but Governor Scott described how Dick Flies, a Vocational Trades teacher had mentored him and guided him to take college classes in the morning and vocational machinist classes in the afternoon. As we know this led Gov. Scott to University of Vermont where he earned his teaching certification, and then a successful career in construction and the rest is history.

I remind you of this story and pathway the Governor took because it is not unlike many of our current Career Education students today. The outcome may be a post-secondary education pathway or an entry way into the workforce after high school. But there is one major difference which is today's students have a tremendous amount of difficulty scheduling and or accessing Career Education, which can and does impact the Vermont Workforce.

You see in this year alone because of COVID 19 Burlington Technical Center had 49 students who were unable to enroll or had to drop because of

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scheduling issues. These students were unable to participate in industries that need new employees- Automotive Technology, Automotive Body and Aviation, Health Sciences, Human Services, Hospitality and Advanced Manufacturing because their schedule would not allow them to attend in person or the student had to make a choice between in person high school classes or virtual high school or the Career Center.

COVID 19 impacts our future enrollments and our outreach and recruitment efforts. Instead of over 200-300 10<sup>th</sup> graders coming to visit our center, meeting their potential teachers and forming that mentoring bond like Governor Scott and Mr. Flies- programs we forced to use technology to create videos to send to potential students as recruitment mechanisms and to try to explain why career education can help a student create a pathway to college career.

Burlington Technical Center has been running virtual Open Houses since January in order to attract students to any of our 12 programs so we can assist students in accessing the Vermont Career Center pathways and be college career ready.

Our recruitment efforts as you know is the sole sources of income in which allows our centers to operate. Without a consistent and steady six semester average our tuition fee will fluctuate (more disincentive) and we may not get back to full enrollment by 2025.

COVID 19 has exposed the reality we all have known that the competitive funding model of tuition high school students to Technical Centers is outdated and does not serve the goal of ensuring every high school student graduates with a career plan of; enrollment, enlistment or employment.

If the goal is to have prepared graduates who are ready to enter either the workforce and or post-secondary education, we need to ensure the barriers to access are clear. Eliminating the funding barrier and implementing the funding model designed by Bill Talbot and Deb Brighton will be a step in opening up access to career pathways in Vermont for every high school student.

As Secretary French stated in his January Policy slides changing the Career Center funding model is crucial to the contribution and improving the labor force, market and unemployment rates due to COVID 19.

Secretary French also discussed in his January 2021 presentation and there was testimony yesterday on 21-0782- AN an Act relating to addressing the needs and conditions of school facilities in the State.

Burlington Technical Center like Burlington High School had to vacate our building on September 8<sup>th</sup> after 1 day of in person learning due to PCB chemicals in the air.

The tech center moved quickly and by the middle of October our programs were in new physical locations throughout Burlington and able to continue our hybrid model of in person, hands on learning. As you know Burlington High School moved into a new building this week and has reopened in person learning as well.

Burlington Technical Center needs your assistance to receive funds to help cover our construction costs and or the ability to operate in 2021-22 school year so we can continue the over 50-year tradition of Career and Technical training & learning in our region which adds to the workforce in our communities.

Between COVID 19 and PCB's it's been quite a year but we will still provide graduates who are ready to enter the labor and post-secondary institutions we were designed to impact.

BTC needs funding to ensure we can fix our building, to have a safe learning environment where we can teach skills that allow students to enter, and impact the Vermont institutions we hold dear; UVM, Castleton University, Air & Army National Guard, VT State Police, UVM Medical Center, over 28 different colleges and universities, be employed as Pre-School teachers across our region, work hotels, restaurants, become Aviation Technicians at the Burlington Airport (you see we have the only Aviation Technician program in the state & with the modifications being built at BVT, we will be able to help supply the workforce), LNA's who are sorely needed in assisted living homes right now, VT State Fleet Mechanics (there are over 8 openings as we speak right now that have gone unfiled for months) which

could be filled by our Auto programs, BTC can also supply Welders, Manufactures and many more that can address the labor issues in the State.

BTC provides the region with graduate's that can help turn around the COVID 19 impact in our state.

Our 96% student placement rate in 2020 where students were enrolled, enlisted or employed after they left BTC which contributes to the workforce of our region and state's economy.

Many of our students left with dual enrollment college credits as well as many industry certifications that can lead to a higher wage.

This year many of our students have been accepted to colleges and universities across New England

Students have earned the right to be presidential scholars, scholastic for the Arts scholarship recipients, participated in work-based learning and will become the next generation of the Vermont workforce. The vocational education from Governor Scott's era has been replaced by the high wage high skill learning that takes place today.

To summarize along with the other Career Center Directors, we are asking to hold harmless our enrollment numbers due to an increase in the number of students who have un-enrolled in Career Education because of COVID. And because of the difficulty in recruiting new students for next year's programs

Burlington Technical Center was built in 1967, it's 53 years old, has not received any facilities funding from the state, and is no longer inhabitable and able to continue our strong tradition of supporting the next generation of Vermonters who live and work in our State. We need your financial commitment to construction and other operational costs.

We are asking to move quickly to change the disincentivized funding formula and review the recommendations by Sec. French, Bill Tallbot and Deb Brighton which will increase Career Education access, which will in turn help support the State's goals for students to attend post-secondary institutions or enter the career workforce.

Finally, Burlington Technical Center needs your support in funding for construction costs in fixing our building which will allow us to continue providing an educated, trained and certified workforce in our region.

An investment in Burlington Technical Center is investing in the continued development of getting Vermont out of the COVID 19 pandemic. We are very proud of what we have accomplished this year and this is how you can help us be a continued presence in our region and community.

**BTC  
Programs**

**Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering • Automotive Body Repair • Automotive Science Technology • Aviation & Aerospace  
Technology  
• Criminal Justice • Culinary Arts • Design & Illustration  
Digital Media Lab • Health Sciences Academy • Human Services • Design Tech Foundational • Welding & Fabrication  
Work Based Learning • Introduction to Healthcare**

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