



April 25, 2024

To: Vermont House Education Committee

From: Chelsea Myers, Associate Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association

Re: Career and Technical Education; S.304

Thank you for inviting testimony from the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) on career and technical education.

In response to the "[Study on the Funding and Governance of Career Technical Education in Vermont](#) (APA Report)" and its anticipated legislative consideration, VSA held two stakeholder feedback meetings in late 2023. The group consisted of eleven superintendents, including three technical center superintendents/directors, and representatives from the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) and the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

Several core themes emerged from the first meeting, including:

1. Many recommendations outlined in the APA Report relate more generally to topics in PreK-12 Education. They should not be discussed in isolation from the overall delivery system, for example, school construction aid.
2. Coordination and collaboration between entities to ensure equity, quality, and efficiency is essential, this includes the higher education system.
3. There is a need for a system that does not create tension or competition between schools and instead focuses on flexibility and accessibility.
4. Expansion requires additional attention to all of the barriers discussed throughout the APA Report, including but not limited to, facilities, transportation, and financial and human resources.
5. As a lever of economic growth in Vermont, any changes to career and technical education should be grounded in a clear vision both statewide and in local communities.

In those stakeholder meetings, we had robust discussions on the report's recommendations, but as Superintendent Scott Farr noted in his testimony yesterday, this bill does little to reflect the recommendations in the APA report.

Expanded Access (Sec. 1): As you discussed in the Committee yesterday with Superintendent Scott Farr, a mandate for grades 6 through 8 students would be challenging to coordinate and implement, and the additional requirement and statute might actually shift from an ecosystem of genuine opportunities to those of compliance. While career exploration in earlier grades is important, there should be flexibility in how this can be accomplished in school

districts and CTE centers with recognition of current capacity limitations and workforce shortages. We support VACTED in their assessment that these opportunities should be left to coordination in the field.

It is unclear what genuine means in terms of providing 'genuine opportunities' for students in grades 9 and 10, especially given the reported waitlists for programs, staff shortages, transportation limitations, and facility limitations.

Comprehensive Career Development Policy (Sec. 2 & 3): VSA will defer to VSBA on the model school board policy. We have not collected feedback from members on this provision.

School Construction Aid (Sec. 4): VSA agrees with this section.

Oversight (Sec. 5 & 6): VSA did not discuss this recommendation in its feedback sessions. With that said, whichever entity is responsible for oversight should have the capacity to do so effectively and towards a shared vision of an effective public school delivery system. Any oversight should be met with a commensurate level of support for the field from the AOE. VSA recognizes the need for an update to the rules. Regardless of the body undertaking an update to the rules, the process should include substantial collaboration with the field.

Postsecondary Program Alignment (Sec. 7):

Superintendents in the feedback sessions recognized a need for better alignment between CTE centers and higher education institutions to the greatest extent possible. There were some reports that students pursue opportunities in other states instead of repeating coursework required by Vermont's postsecondary institutions. A seamless secondary to post-secondary to career pathway is critical for Vermont's economic future. Vermont must do what it can to both attract and retain a skilled workforce. As Superintendent Farr said, more work will need to be done to address this need.