



To: Senate Committee on Education

From: Jay Nichols, Executive Director

Date: April 24, 2024

Subject: S. 304 Changes to Career and Technical Education

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director the Vermont Principals' Association.

CTE Notes S. 304

Section 1: Responsibility of Local Boards in Sending Districts:

- We want students to have a genuine opportunity to participate fully and benefit from career technical education. However, we have to recognize that there will be natural scheduling conflicts especially for students in small high schools. For example, AP history likely has only one teacher and as a student I might have to choose between AP history and Forestry.
- Six through 8th we agree with enrichment and exposure to CTE programming. As always, we worry about this becoming an unfunded mandate. Flexibility for virtual options etc. are critical.
- We also support providing students with robust pre-tech and exploratory career and technical courses. Again, we worry about logistics and any potential unfunded mandates.

Section 2: Career Development Policy

We support this in concept but would like to see a model policy at the state level with the details spelled out. It is hard to agree to anything absent that. This is complex work and whatever policy is developed needs to account for that. I'm a big believer in local control but I believe that local control often gets in the way of opportunities for students at least as far as CTE education is concerned.

Section 3: Development of Policy

Again, reserve comments until we see the policy but we are very interested in this process and what will come of it.

Section 4: Construction Aid

We totally agree and have testified in favor of this previously including earlier this year in Senate Education. I can share our thorough testimony on the original bill easily if any committee members would like to see that

Section 5 & 6: Oversight & Rulemaking

Whether it is the Secretary or State Board I have testified recently in the Senate Education committee about the desire of many in the field to move back to an independent State Board that oversees a Commissioner of Education. A truly independent State Board with the resources to actually do the job effectively and on a regular basis would make more sense to me. What I like about this conceptually is that a State Board is supposed to be responsive to the public while an agency may not be. Again, though having an independent state board and a commissioner is a direction that our current ongoing public education crisis indicates is time back to a shift to a more effective and less politicalized model.

Two other comments:

1. Calendar: It is time that Vermont has a statewide calendar. Many CTE Directors can share the number of instructional days they essentially use due to a variance in calendars. I have heard the number is as high as 20 days. Think of things like field trips; different final exam schedules, etc. The more we can tighten this up the better.
2. Embedded graduation credits for CTE Experience: I do not have suggested language for this concept but I strongly believe that embedded graduation requirements should be a part of every CTE program. And, we should look to standardize that concept.

Previous Testimony Senate Education:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c9vOVRPixoygkLODMhMc2iPn9ynCEKLom4r6MgT6_mc/edit