



February 27, 2024

To: Vermont Senate 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 and should not be discussed in isolation from the overall delivery system.
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.

**Funding (Sec. 1 & 2):** Developing a non-competitive funding mechanism for CTE was a shared value expressed at the feedback sessions. VSA will await forthcoming information from the Agency of Education (AOE) on their proposed block funding and transition mechanism. Given the significant pressures on the Education Fund, the details of any shifts in the funding structure will be tremendously important. They should be thoughtfully discussed and considered within the full context of the education delivery system. Any changes in funding should not leave school districts or CTE centers with fewer resources. Within changes to the funding mechanism, there needs to be an acknowledgment that the sending LEAs still provide services for students who attend CTE programs.

**Expanded Access (Sec. 3):** As you learned from [VACTED in their testimony on February 23, 2024](#), requiring an annual visit for all grades 6 through 8 students would be immensely challenging to coordinate and implement. 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. Adding opportunities to the middle grades should not detract from the day-to-day CTE programming offered to secondary students.

In regards to providing 'genuine opportunities' for students in grades 9 and 10, it is unclear what genuine means, especially within the context of reported waitlists for programs, staff shortages, and facility limitations.

**Comprehensive Career Development Policy (Sec. 4 & 5):** VSA recommends hearing testimony from the Vermont School Boards Association as it relates to school board policy. The bill's current draft does not clearly delineate the model policy and the implementation plan (procedures are also mentioned further in the section). The model policy and implementation plan should be clearly articulated and align with the role of school board policy compared to other guiding documents within a school district.

**School Construction Aid (Sec. 6):** VSA agrees with this section.

**Oversight (Sec. 7):** 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. 9):**

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.

Thank you.