
TESTIMONY

Testimony To: House Education Committee

Respectfully Submitted by: Heather A. Bouchey, Ph.D., Interim Secretary of Education

Subject: **Agency of Education Proposal to S.304**

Date: March 1, 2024

We want to thank the committee members for their engagement on the CTE reform proposals in S.304. It is clear that the committee shares our commitment to a strong, sustainable system of Career Technical Education delivered equitably to students.

The Agency has proposed a reform to CTE funding that would shift the state from a tuition-based funding system to a block grant system. This reform would move the system forward in line with recommendations in the 2023 Study on the Funding and Governance of Career Technical Education in Vermont commissioned through Act 127 of 2022 (APA Study).

CTE Funding Reform

The Agency proposes to create a state-paid grant for all CTE centers equal to the funding each center received in the prior year, under the current tuition model, plus an inflation factor. This approach is intended to keep centers whole with respect to state funding. Block grant funding has the following advantages:

- Creates predictability and stability in funding
- Holds centers harmless for fluctuating enrollment
- Alleviates the funding-driven tension between sending districts and CTE districts
- Provides greater insight at the State level into needs and resources
- Moves the system toward more uniform and equitable funding approaches

This change is designed to be cost-neutral to the Education Fund, since district-level budgets will no longer need to include enrollment-based tuition for students to attend CTE. Instead, the same level of funding will come through an appropriation to fund the block grants. This is the funding mechanism that is commonly called “off the top of the Education Fund.”

Model Policy Amendment

In the as-introduced bill, Sec. 4 creates a requirement for districts to adopt a comprehensive career development policy that is consistent with and at



least as comprehensive as a model written by the Agency of Education. We have consulted with the VSBA, VPA, VSA and VTNEA and developed the following recommendation for further amendment. This amendment places emphasis on requiring districts to provide career planning to students. New proposed language compared to the as-introduced bill is underlined below.

§ 1547. COMPREHENSIVE CAREER DEVELOPMENT POLICY

(a) The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and the Vermont School Boards Association, shall develop a model Comprehensive Career Development Policy and implementation plan for all secondary students. The Secretary shall review the model policy not less than every five years and make a determination as to whether the policy needs updating. The model policy shall ensure each student has the opportunity for robust discussion and planning regarding their career awareness, exploration, and future goals, consistent with the student's personalized learning plan. The policy shall require each district to partner with the CTE center to develop and ensure the provision of career planning. The policy shall encourage districts to work regionally together in alignment on this policy implementation to preserve CTE capacity.

strike the rest of Sec. 4