



## **Legislative Testimony on Career and Technical Education (CTE) Reform (Draft 25-0915)**

**March 19, 2025**

**To:** House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

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

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical issue of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Vermont. As Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), I work closely with school superintendents on a broad range of issues impacting public education in our state. Among our members are four superintendent-directors overseeing Vermont's independent CTE districts, in addition to the many superintendents responsible for CTE centers embedded within larger school districts or supervisory unions.

We appreciate your commitment to improving CTE as a vital component of workforce development and student success. A thriving CTE system is essential to ensuring our graduates are well-prepared for an evolving job market and a rapidly transforming world. We commend your recognition of this issue as a cornerstone of Vermont's education and workforce development strategy.

### **The Need for Comprehensive Reform**

While we acknowledge that CTE needs improvements, we firmly believe that reform efforts must be integrated into a broader transformation of Vermont's education system. CTE should not be treated in isolation from PK-12 education, as it is inextricably linked to the entire public education system. In general, we support the goals outlined by VACTED and Kendal Smith.

A primary concern is ensuring that we do not lose the key benefits of the current system, including strong community connections and the critical support provided by host and sending PK-12 systems. Equitable access to CTE opportunities must be at the forefront of any reform. We are concerned that a single governance structure could inadvertently exacerbate existing barriers, distancing local communities from supporting students and advocating for their admission and success in technical education.

### **Alignment with VACTED's Goals**

We believe that several of the recommendations we have provided to the House Education Committee on a transformation framework and proposal align closely with some of the objectives outlined by VACTED. Specifically, we propose:

## 1. **Creation of a Working Group for Instructional and District Scale**

- This group would guide district consolidation with a clear focus on increasing student opportunities while ensuring maximum efficiency.
- CTE governance should not be decoupled but integrated within this charge.
- The charge would include determining the optimal number and boundaries of school districts based on sound research, Vermont's unique educational landscape, and a comprehensive analysis of school locations, conditions, and capacity.
- The Working Group would also quantify cost savings, identify expanded opportunities for students, and use GIS mapping and other tools to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes.
- We recommend that this work be completed by December 2025 to be intentional but not delay movement toward greater equity, opportunity, and affordability.

## 2. **Systemic Changes for Consistency and Efficiency**

- Establishing a statewide school calendar, effective FY27, developed in consultation with educators and reflecting Vermont's diverse cultures.
- Appropriating resources for a common finance and student information system, along with a standardized structure for collective bargaining agreements and other contracts. Implementation to coincide with the formation of new governance structures.
- Implementing statewide graduation standards tied to a future-focused vision for Vermont's public education system, including CTE, led by the Commission on the Future of Public Education. Implemented in time for the Graduating Class of 2031.

## **Conclusion**

We recognize that the Committee Bill you have proposed seeks to address many of these same concerns. However, we urge that these efforts be pursued in coordination with broader educational reform rather than in isolation. Vermont is contemplating significant transformation, and CTE must be an integrated part of these discussions.

For these reasons, we respectfully recommend that the Committee on Commerce and Economic Development refrain from advancing Draft 25-0915 as a standalone measure. Instead, we urge collaboration with the House Education Committee and, where appropriate, the House Ways and Means Committee to ensure that CTE is embedded within a comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable transformation of Vermont's education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions.