

Vermont Principals' Association

Supporting Leaders & Learners

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March 18, 2025

To: House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
From: Jay Nichols, Executive Director, Vermont Principals' Association
Subject: Draft 2.1 CTE Bill

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. As I'm looking at the proposed bill, I'm trying to look at it from a statewide perspective and in concert with other governance and educational funding concepts. The CTE Directors asked me to facilitate a meeting with them recently in which we discussed a number of policy constructs, some of which are included in your bill.

It is clear to me that after meeting with the Career Center Directors, that their preferred path forward in regards to governance would be to keep things as they are until decisions have been made at the state level as to the number, composition, and geographical boundaries of school districts in general is finalized. I believe the CTE Directors fully understand change is coming. Further, it is my conclusion that they are supportive of any changes that will result in better opportunities, efficiencies, and programming for students. These are caring leaders who really want to provide the best for the students they serve.

It is also clear to me that if the CTE Directors had to make a four selection choice now between being:

1. wrapped into the 5 districts proposed by the Governor's transformation plan or
2. becoming essentially under the governance of the Agency of Education, the majority of them would prefer choice either
3. to become a CTE district of their own which this bill proposes or
4. To have 3 CTE Districts in the state (South, Chittenden County, North)

However, it is important to note that while they are not completely opposed to the last two constructs, they strongly believe seeing how the rest of the governance structure of K-12 education comes to fruition is paramount before finalizing CTE governance decisions. That is the main message I want to convey today. And, in full disclosure, I agree with them and support that position.

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I do want to publicly say again, that the ultimate best path forward from my perspective is to have larger high schools with comprehensive programs that include the Career and Technical Centers. I just don't see a way to get there anytime soon – but any governance structure that we build that ultimately gets us to that model will be best for the state's high school students in the long run. Obviously, that would involve construction costs and the closing of some high schools and the building of newer and fewer high schools and I know that won't happen easily.

The rest of my testimony will be brief commentary on the tenants of the bill itself.

Sect. 2:

The 15 service regions described in the bill seem to make sense and as far as I can tell are consistent with the delivery model in place today. And, of course, if the service regions are under one district umbrella options for students in other service regions would be easier to accomplish.

CTE Board Governance:

15 members = 1 per service region, selected by Superintendents of region (OK) so the Superintendents of each region would have to come to agreement on who would serve on the new statewide Board? That might be difficult.

2 Year Terms = Need to find a way to stagger this, we don't want a lot of Board turnover unnecessarily, addressed later in the proposal

Credits and Grades Earned:

Completely agree with this language. CTE courses approved by the Agency for credit in a content area must be accepted by home school districts toward attainment of diplomas. If there are issues or questions about rigor the home school district and the CTE Service Area and/or CTE District can collectively work on these issues with the Agency of Education being the final arbiter.

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Major issues not addressed:

- Common statewide calendar
 - Needed for student offerings and professional learning for educators including content like CTE educators
- Funding
 - I know that is TBD; to the degree possible CTE Directors and high school principals want to make sure there is a way to eliminate competitive funding so that neither host districts nor CTE's are working at cross purposes when it comes to attracting students.
- Infrastructure
 - This will need to be addressed at the state wide level in that not too far future. Some of our access problems can be addressed with construction enabling programming where wait lists are common today
- Serving Students
 - Not sure really how the one CTE district model is necessarily going to lead to service for more students – at least not at the level we would like to see. My hope is that eventually we get to the point that we have no waiting lists and that every student gets into the program they are interested in

Those are my initial thoughts, glad to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols