



BSD Testimony Regarding Career and Technical Education Aspects of Education Reform

Chair Marcotte, Vice Chair Graning, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Tom Flanagan, Superintendent of the Burlington School District and I am here with Jason Reed, Director of Burlington Technical Center, or BTC.

BSD Superintendent Tom Flanagan - We appreciate the Committee's interest in better understanding how BTC is structured and how our governance model supports the success of our students and partnerships. BSD and BTC shares your commitment to ensuring every student, no matter where they live, has access to high-quality, relevant CTE programs that prepare them for success in the workforce and beyond.

We support working to make CTE an accessible and important aspect of Vermont students' education, and we agree that equity and access must be at the heart of any changes to the system. These goals are aligned to the work we are doing at Burlington Technical Center and we are encouraged by the desire to center equity and access in this process.

However, we believe decisions about CTE should stay close to our students, their sending schools, and our regional industries. Strong, direct relationships with local industries and partner high schools are essential to building and maintaining programs that respond to real workforce needs. A single, centralized governance model risks weakening the community connections that are so vital to CTE success.

Rather than moving immediately to a single statewide district, we encourage a more measured approach that builds on existing regional strengths while addressing system-wide goals. Specifically, we support:

- Encouraging increased regional collaboration where it makes sense, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model
- Continuing to strengthen partnerships with regional high schools, and continued collaboration with other CTE centers through our common Regional Advisory Board and director partnership.
- Expanding and helping regional advisory boards to foster deeper community engagement
- Setting clear statewide goals for access and equity, but maintaining local flexibility in how those goals are met. This is happening now.
- Increasing funding for transportation, which remains a major barrier to access for many students. More transportation would also allow for students to more easily jump across regions where necessary.

We are also concerned about moving forward with major changes to CTE governance without fully considering how they intersect with other education and funding reforms already underway. These decisions should be informed by comprehensive analysis and careful planning to avoid unintended consequences, particularly the risk of disrupting CTE centers and programs that are already successful and serving students well. We recommend aligning this work with the broader efforts in the Education and Ways and Means Committees and taking the time to model different scenarios, engage stakeholders, and ensure any changes advance equity and expand access without undermining what is working.

BTC is committed to working collaboratively toward solutions that ensure all Vermont students benefit from a strong CTE system. We respectfully urge you to take the time to get this right. With that, said, I'm going to turn it over to Director Reed to tell you a little more about BTC.

BTC Director Jason Reed - Thank you Tom and thank you Chair Marcotte, Vice Chair Graning, and members of the Committee.

It's a privilege to be here today. As Superintendent Flanagan mentioned, I am the director of BTC. I've been in this role for the past two years and I have worked in Burlington School District since 2005. Before then, I served in two vocational education environments, including working in administration at the New England Culinary Institute and as an Academic and Career Preparation Supervisor at a federally funded Job Corps center, overseeing GED and diploma completion for students co-enrolled in vocational training.

- BTC is a half-day center that is under the supervision of Superintendent Flanagan, and under the governance of the Burlington School Board. This structure has existed since BTC's origin decades ago.
- Over the years, BTC has established long-term relationships with our region's sending schools, and these relationships continue to evolve as education shifts (proficiency-based transcripts, flexible pathways, etc.).
- These relationships are working well in creating an excellent education for our region's students enrolled in career and technical education as part of well-rounded PreK-12 education.
- We have mechanisms in place for school district leaders, industry representatives, and high education representatives through our Regional Advisory Board, and each program's Program Advisory Committee.
- We are closely monitored by our host board, and the Agency of Education through district progress reporting, annual survey data, and the massive Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment.
- Our performance data under the current system is meeting or exceeding the AOE's targets for us, and with host district support, our district data shows high student and family satisfaction.
- We are continually considering our budget and tuition rates based on the goals of the BSD, and the challenges facing our sending districts. There is work to do in controlling costs due to increased salaries and healthcare expenses. We continue to work on this in making career and technical education financially accessible to districts' students.

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