

To: House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

From: Chelsea Myers, Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association

Re: Career and Technical Education

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Vermont. CTE plays a vital role in preparing students for success by equipping them with the skills, experience, and credentials necessary to thrive in today's workforce. Beyond benefiting students, CTE strengthens our communities and fuels Vermont's economy by developing a pipeline of skilled professionals who meet the needs of local industries. It is a crucial component of Vermont's education ecosystem as a pathway that bridges academic learning with real-world application. Vermont's CTE delivery model is complex, and its various components are inextricably linked with the broader delivery system. As we consider the future of CTE, it is essential to recognize these connections and ensure that any proposed changes support the continued success of students.

Without a full proposal to respond to and without having a focused conversation with the VSA Board on this topic, I will focus on the following two elements in this testimony:

1. The response that VSA provided to the 2023 APA report.
2. Some questions that have emerged thus far from the elements of the Governor's proposal that we do have available at this time.

2023 APA Report on the Funding and Governance of CTE in Vermont

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 and representatives from the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA) and the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

During the first meeting 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.

On November 30, 2023, the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors (VACTED) released a memo outlining five priorities for immediate action:

1. **Non-Competitive Funding Model** – Establish block funding directly from the Education Fund.
2. **Common Statewide Calendar** – Align school calendars, including shared professional development days.
3. **Infrastructure Investment** – Develop a facilities and equipment plan to eliminate waitlists and enable program growth.
4. **Recognition of CTE-Embedded Academics** – Ensure CTE coursework counts toward high school graduation requirements.
5. **Agency of Education Staffing** – Increase staffing capacity to support CTE centers.

At a second stakeholder meeting on December 7, 2023, participants discussed VACTED's priorities and identified areas of agreement and further consideration:

- **Funding Model** – Stakeholders agreed on the need for a non-competitive funding model but emphasized that any shifts must avoid reducing resources for schools or CTE centers. How to do this without increasing costs to the education system will be a challenge. The cost differences between programs must be accounted for in any funding changes. In addition, there was a recognition that there are still services provided by sending districts and these varied based on the student and whether programs were full-day or half-day.
- **Statewide Calendar** – While a statewide calendar would benefit coordination, implementation challenges (e.g., collective bargaining agreements) must be addressed. A phased approach, starting with aligned professional development days and vacation schedules, may be more feasible. We are pleased to announce that starting in FY26, to the best of our knowledge, all school districts will share the same February and April break schedules.
- **Infrastructure and Facilities** – CTE infrastructure needs should be integrated into broader state capital planning. Addressing immediate equipment and space shortages should align with Vermont's economic development strategy.
- **CTE-Embedded Academics** – Ensuring that CTE coursework counts toward graduation is widely supported, though differences in proficiency requirements across districts remain a challenge. Best practices from successful regional models could help address inconsistencies. State Board Rule Series 2370 should be reviewed to ensure alignment with proficiency-based learning.
- **Agency of Education Staffing** – While increased staffing could be beneficial, it should focus on support rather than regulation. Enhancing curriculum coordination and proficiency alignment was identified as a greater priority than additional oversight.

Emerging Questions Regarding CTE in the Governor's Proposal

The Governor's proposal would restructure Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Vermont by establishing a statewide Education Service Agency (ESA), referred to as a CTE BOCES, to oversee all center-based CTE programs. Key elements of the proposal:

Statewide Oversight – Governance of CTE centers would shift from regional and local control to a single, centralized statewide BOCES.

Changes to the Funding Model – Rather than the current system, where funds flow through local districts, the BOCES would receive direct funding for CTE students.

- Each CTE student would still be eligible for the \$13,200 base amount, but \$8,000 of that would be redirected to the CTE BOCES per full-time student.
- Sending districts would keep the remaining portion of the base amount to provide services such as counseling and special education.
- The CTE BOCES would receive additional funding through a 1.3 weight in the foundation formula, bringing total per-student funding to \$25,000 per FTE.

BOCES Responsibilities – The BOCES would be tasked with funding and managing CTE center operations and expanding CTE opportunities within middle and high schools.

The proposal would significantly alter the governance and funding structure of CTE in Vermont. However, details remain unclear regarding how these changes would impact existing programs, local decision-making, and the ability of sending districts to support students who participate in CTE.

Questions:

1. What mechanisms will ensure that proposed changes enhance CTE rather than disrupt existing programs and partnerships? What level of local input will be maintained in decision-making?
2. Does the proposed CTE BOCES have the ability to raise funds beyond the base amount, similar to the funding formula for sending districts?
3. How does the BOCES structure differ from a single CTE district, and how would funds be allocated among CTE centers?
4. How is the CTE BOCES governed, and could a BOCES model function under different governance structures?
5. Will there continue to be variability between half-day and full-day CTE programs, or is there an expectation to shift toward comprehensive full-day programs? How does the funding structure account for students who split their time between CTE centers and their high schools versus those who attend full-time?
6. What happens to existing CTE properties under this proposal? Would ownership automatically transfer to the BOCES, or would districts retain ownership? How will property assets and facility debt be handled?

7. How does the Agency of Education plan to build the capacity necessary to support CTE centers, including professional learning and workforce partnership management?
8. How does this proposal fit within the broader vision of transitioning toward regional comprehensive high schools?
9. Where does Adult Education fit into this model? Since it is a largely unfunded mandate, how would it be supported within the BOCES structure?
10. How would BOCES distribute funds among CTE centers?
11. Who will be responsible for granting diplomas—sending schools, CTE centers, or the BOCES?
12. How will transportation costs be covered, and who will ensure students can access CTE programs without financial or logistical barriers?
13. Is the proposed funding split between sending schools and CTE centers sufficient to meet student needs? What safeguards will prevent sending schools from being underfunded?
14. If the base funding amount increases in the future, how will that increase be distributed between sending schools and CTE centers?
15. How will the proposed changes impact shared services currently integrated with CTE centers, such as registrars, HR, educator licensing, transportation, equipment, and food service?
16. How do independent CTE centers fit within this model?

At the heart of these discussions is a fundamental question: What is the overarching vision for Career and Technical Education within Vermont's education system? Any proposed changes to governance and funding should be evaluated against a clear, strategic vision that prioritizes equity, accessibility, and high-quality opportunities for all students. Without a well-defined and shared understanding of what CTE should look like within the broader system, there is a risk that structural shifts—however well-intended—could create new challenges rather than solve existing ones. As we consider these proposals, we must ask whether they truly align with a long-term vision for CTE that strengthens pathways for students, supports workforce needs, and integrates seamlessly with the rest of Vermont's public education system.