

Vermont Principals' Association
Supporting Leaders & Learners

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House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development
General Overview Testimony on CTE Funding and Governance

For the record, Jay Nichols, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. First of all, I would like to make it clear that the VPA does not have an official position on the BOCES approach to governance nor do we have an official position on the Foundation Formula contemplated by the administration, although we do have concerns with the projected \$180 million dollars in projected savings without details which to use seems to mean less services for children. To the degree possible, we are reserving judgement until we see an actual bill or bills and then will try to respond appropriately through the given committee of jurisdiction. What I can do however is share some high level thoughts for your consideration as a committee as relates to Career and Technical Center Education in Vermont. And let me start by saying, I think the success of our CTE programs in Vermont is vital to our future as a state.

Thoughts for consideration:

- **Competition:** The current tuitioning/funding model puts high schools and CTE centers in a position in which they are competing for limited dollars. This competition doesn't serve students well ultimately and, in some cases, especially for small high schools, significantly limits options for students at the high school who choose not to or are not able to get admission into the Career Center. Decoupling this should be a priority. There are several ways to do this that I can think of including taking money "off the top" of the education fund. There is no perfect solution AND any movement we can make toward limiting competition without hurting school districts, especially those with small high schools because of necessity, the better
- **Program Enrollment Limits:** You could get specific information on this from each program in each center through their CTE directors. However, what I have heard from a number of CTE Directors as well as high school principals, is that popular programs fill up fast and that there are waiting lists. This often leads to students who have a real high interest in a program being put on a waiting list, or having to settle for their second choice, or not being able to take a CTE program at all. Some principals maintain that student who perhaps have the most need for a CTE program, students with high interest in a program

but may be struggling in regular high school traditional courses, are not selected in an increasingly selective process for high demand programs.

- Collectively Bargained Agreements: Hiring teachers and dealing with local CBA's can be problematic for Superintendents, CTE Directors, and potential CTE hires. An advantage to having a common CBA just among CTE employees, for example, would be that it would be easier to utilize industry standards in pay to attract higher qualified candidates to our CTE programs. E.g. Carpentry Teacher at a CTE when I was a superintendent.
- Common Calendar: Another consideration to think about relates to having a Common calendar. This is important for the CTE centers for several reasons. In many systems, students miss up to two or three weeks of actually CTE learning time because of the difference of calendars from areas schools. Now this has improved a lot but still is an issue. A common statewide calendar would fix this issue for the most part. An added advantage would be that CTE's would be better positioned to provide Professional learning opportunities for similar programs so that you could have program specific training from experts and have some type of economy of scale – e.g. bringing all of the Allied Health teachers in the state together several times during the year without having to hire substitute teachers
- Comprehensive Regional High School approach: This is a great approach. If we were starting out from scratch, I'd favor having comprehensive high schools with CTE's as part of that. Each high school would have 1000 students or thereabouts with brand new shining facilities. Best case scenario, looking at current construction costs, requirements for quality and safety, and without considering staffing, according to my close friend Chat GPT – we would be looking at around \$200 million per school. And as far as I know, the Governor's proposal doesn't have any funds to even support updates to the current CTE facilities.
- Embedded Credits System: I think we need a better system to determine whether a class provides a credit/proficiency for a content area. Currently, it is all over the place. I would like to see the AOE take the lead on this. I even think having the same basic graduation standards across the state is something to consider. Dueling calls example; high school principal vs. CTE Director on English class
- Costs: CTE's are expensive to fund. Any changes in funding need to make sure they do not put us in a place in which we provide less opportunities for the students of Vermont. Investments in CTE programming, especially in high pay fields, is money well invested.
- Infrastructure: Any changes in law that provide for school construction funding must also take into consideration the current and future needs of our technical education system.
- AOE Staffing: I'd like to see AOE staffing to the level it was as a department many years ago when the field would reach out to the AOE and the AOE (Department then) would actually send people out to the field who were content area experts and could provide help to the field. CTE is no exception in this area.
- Financial oversight management: I'm not sure about this one but I believe this is merit to considering some type of Business Manager or State CTE Superintendent to oversee all of the CTE's. Having someone well versed and solely dedicated to that world could be very beneficial. That said, there would need to be a lot of green book changes and lots of

questions would arise around contracts, district property, local/regional control. etc. but it is an idea that I believe has merit and should at least be considered.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Nichols