

To: House Committee on Education

From: Vermont's Four AEL Providers

Date: May 4, 2026

Subject: Adult Diploma Program and Access to Career Technical Education Courses

## Background

In 2024, the Vermont General Assembly passed H.883 (Act 113), which repealed the High School Completion Program (HSCP) and made changes to the Adult Diploma Program (ADP). HSCP previously operated under 16 V.S.A. §943 as a school district program within Vermont's Flexible Pathways Initiative. Through HSCP, eligible Vermonters aged 16 and older could work with an Adult Education and Literacy provider and their district of residence to earn a high school diploma.

Act 113 repealed the HSCP statute and updated Vermont law to support the Adult Diploma Program under 16 V.S.A. §945. The statute now provides that eligible residents who are at least 16 years old, have not received a high school diploma, and are not enrolled in a public or approved independent school may earn a diploma through the Adult Diploma Program in partnership with participating high schools. The change followed the work of the Adult Education and Literacy Student Access Committee established under Act 78 of 2023, which studied access to adult education and recommended updates to Vermont's adult diploma pathways.

**A key operational change has emerged as a result of this transition:** high school-age adult education students can no longer access regional *secondary* Career Technical Education programs.

- Under the former High School Completion Program, school-age adult education students were explicitly permitted to enroll in daytime CTE programs at their regional technical centers, with tuition paid by their district of residence. This created a pathway for students to combine academic completion with hands-on technical training within the secondary CTE system.
- Under the new Adult Diploma Program, the Agency of Education guidance has interpreted enrollment rules in a way that excludes these students from participating in secondary CTE.
- This change in access applies specifically to high school-age learners seeking to participate in the regional secondary CTE system.
- This change was not specified in the legislation that sunset the High School Completion Program and revised the Adult Diploma Program, nor was it a topic of discussion in the Study Committee that recommended this legislative change.
- It is unclear whether our Agency's interpretation of state and federal legislation governing adult education is accurate.

## Impact on Career Technical Education Access

Under the former High School Completion Program, some students were able to participate in both:

- an Adult Education high school completion pathway
- a regional high-school-age daytime Career Technical Education program

This pathway was particularly valuable for adult learners who wanted to complete their diploma while gaining technical skills that directly support employment.

Historically, this pathway served a small but important group of students, typically **10 to 20 students statewide each year**, who enrolled with an Adult Education provider while also participating in a secondary Career Technical Education program.

Under the current interpretation of the Adult Diploma Program, this pathway is no longer available.

Secondary Career Technical Education programs are funded through a student's district of residence. When a district pays tuition for a student to attend a regional CTE center, the student is considered enrolled in that district. Because the ADP statute requires that students not be enrolled in a public or approved independent school, participation in a secondary CTE program can make students ineligible for the Adult Diploma Program.

As a result, adult learners must now choose between:

- completing their diploma through the Adult Diploma Program, OR
- accessing a secondary Career Technical Education program.

## **AEL Governance: WIOA State Plan**

AEL services are covered by WIOA. The current State WIOA plan has been approved from 2024-2027, and the language in the state WIOA plan - although outdated because it still references HSCP - suggests that AEL students should have access to programs like CTE.

- Here is the state WIOA plan:  
[https://labor.vermont.gov/sites/labor/files/documents/WIOA\\_Vermont\\_PYs\\_2024-2027%20%28Approved%29.pdf](https://labor.vermont.gov/sites/labor/files/documents/WIOA_Vermont_PYs_2024-2027%20%28Approved%29.pdf)
- **Goal #3 on pg 149 states:**

*Goal 3: Increase assistance to Vermonters to encourage high school completion, earn additional qualifications like industry-recognized certificates, participate in registered apprenticeships, or pursue post-secondary degree program.*

- *High School Completion Program will remain accessible to unenrolled from school students who meet eligibility requirements in compliance with state statute, policy, and structures for earning a high school diploma.*
- *AOE and AEL providers will access industry-recognized credentials (IRCs) that are available, identify pre-requisites for earning credentials and develop instructional strategies and IET programs that expand successful completion IRCs;*
- *AOE will work with the Vermont Department of Labor and the One-Stop Operator to help AEL providers identify local registered apprenticeship opportunities and explore developing pre-apprenticeship programs (which may also be Integrated and Education Training programs) for AEL students.*
- *Services that lead to successful transition to post-secondary education will be provided through access to IRCs, career exploration and information on career pathways, exposure to post-secondary level instruction through the dual enrollment program for eligible students, linkages with Vermont Student Assistance Program, and other resources that provide information on financing post-secondary education. In addition, transition plans will be created for every AEL student that include exploration and resources for transition to postsecondary and employment.*

## Why This Matters

Preventing Adult Diploma Program students from participating in CTE programs will limit workforce pathways for some of Vermont's most motivated adult learners. Given Vermont's ongoing workforce challenges, supporting integrated academic and technical pathways aligns closely with statewide workforce and economic development priorities.

While we understand the Agency's perspective about not wanting to incentivize students to leave their public high school, it is important to note that **access to daytime CTE is not incentive enough for the students who come to us to stay in their local school.**

- Adult education students are often the students who face the greatest barriers in our public education system, and **they come to us only after they have already made the decision to leave their public school.** In other words, our programs are not the *reason* they leave school; they make the decision to leave for many complicated life reasons, and *then* they come to us. If we were not an available program, they would have still left school.
- Reasons why the students we serve leave school include **teen pregnancy; relentless bullying; they need a job because they do not have parental support; etc.** The incentive to access daytime CTE is not incentive enough to keep these individuals with acute needs in school.
- **Adult education students are the students who are most likely to stay and work in Vermont.** Again, our students come to us because they need a flexible pathway to gain a diploma, because due to life circumstances, they cannot afford to be in a school five days a week for full days. Many of our students are already working because they lack parental support at home, and these are the students who are most eager to move up in their (often technical) career in Vermont. They are already in the workforce, eager to upskill, and we believe it runs counter to the State's goals around career readiness to prevent these students' access to daytime CTE.

## Potential Policy Clarification

While we would prefer to see a solution that clarifies that students in the Adult Diploma Program *can* access daytime CTE under the same guidance as the sunset High School Completion Program, we understand that there are concerns about federal compliance. With this in mind, we support the language coming from the House Commerce committee asking for recommendations on how to address this issue. ***This language is critical for Vermont's most vulnerable yet motivated students to be able to move up in their careers.***

## Fiscal Impact

Restoring this pathway is expected to have a limited fiscal impact. Historically, approximately **10 to 20 students statewide each year** participated in both an Adult Education diploma pathway and a secondary Career Technical Education program.

These students would receive services from both an Adult Education and Literacy provider and a regional Career Technical Education center. Because the number of students affected is small, the overall fiscal impact is expected to be limited. Implementation would likely require coordination between the Agency of Education, Adult Education providers, and CTE centers to determine how services and funding responsibilities would be structured.

## Conclusion

The transition from HSCP to ADP through Act 113 created important improvements to Vermont's adult diploma system. However, the current interpretation of enrollment rules has created an unintended barrier for a small number of adult learners seeking both a diploma and technical training.

Clarifying the relationship between the Adult Diploma Program and secondary Career Technical Education programs would restore a valuable pathway for Vermont learners while supporting the state's workforce development goals.

Vermont's adult education providers would welcome the opportunity to work with legislators and the Agency of Education to identify a policy solution that restores this workforce pathway for adult learners.

Thank you for your consideration,

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