

Yasmine Ziesler
FY26 Budget Public Hearing Testimony
February 20, 2025

Good evening. I am Yasmine Ziesler, chair of the board of Advance Vermont. I have worked for over 20 years in the Vermont State Colleges system as a student advisor and academic leader, and I currently teach at CCV.

I am here to speak to Advance Vermont's request for \$350,000 in base funding to support MyFutureVT— the state's only free online resource for career and education exploration and planning. It is a vital resource for career and education seekers of any age, as well as those who support them like career and school counselors, teachers, employers and family members. It provides a one-stop solution, integrating Vermont's education programs, funding sources, and career information, in a user-friendly website designed to support Vermont's vulnerable and underserved communities.

I am a resident of East Montpelier, and like my fellow Vermonters, this is the time of year when I read our school district's annual report. For me, one of the most important details is what the report says about the future plans of our high school graduates. There is much to celebrate in graduation rates and students who continue to two and four-year colleges, but what is missing for me are students' plans for other important career pathways - through apprenticeships, certificates, military service, and other employer-supported opportunities. What I want to see for all Vermonters is that they have the information to explore careers and education of all kinds vital for Vermont. Sustaining MyFutureVT is therefore not just a budgetary ask; it is a crucial investment for the people of Vermont.

With legislative support since its launch in 2021, MyFutureVT has become a go-to resource for **over 120,000 users**, with **9 out of 10 reporting a positive change in their career and education planning**. MyFutureVT provides a public good, and continued state support in the form of a base appropriation will ensure that it will remain a free, accessible statewide resource. Thank you.