

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Legislature,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today for Stand Up for Students Day. My name is Jeneve Joslin. I have worked at Central Vermont Career Center for the past five years and have spent 15 years teaching in healthcare workforce education. I am proud to represent Career and Technical Education in Central Vermont.

This is not the vocational school of the past. Today's CTE is rigorous, credential-rich, college-connected, and rooted in belonging and purpose. Our students earn industry-recognized credentials, gain transcripted college credit, and work in real partnership with employers and community organizations. They are engaged because they feel seen, capable, and valued.

The demand reflects that. This year alone, we turned away more than 100 qualified applicants. These students were ready and qualified. We simply do not have the space. That is a construction funding and capacity issue that is limiting opportunity for both students and Vermont employers.

We also face a serious recruitment and retention challenge. Across the state, CTE instructor pay is not competitive with industry wages. This makes it extremely difficult to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals, especially in healthcare and the trades. We are asking industry experts to take significant pay cuts to teach. If we want strong workforce programs, we must make these positions financially sustainable.

Let me share one brief story. A student once told she would never succeed in healthcare earned her Certified Clinical Medical Assistant and Certified Phlebotomy Technician credentials, completed six college credits, and is now working as a nurse in Vermont.

I recently visited another graduate from the Class of 2022 at the hospital where she now works. She was in tears because she could not get her 21st birthday off due to staffing shortages. At 21 years old, she is already essential to her workplace. She is not just employed; she is part of Vermont's workforce pipeline and part of the solution to our healthcare staffing crisis.

CTE prepares students to step directly into entry-level roles and to succeed in competitive college programs. It is not a barrier to college; it is often the reason students persist, because they have direction, experience, and confidence.

We have the students. We have strong industry partners. Enrollment, credentials, and college credits are all up.

What we do not have is the physical capacity or competitive compensation structure to meet the demand.

If we are serious about workforce development and keeping young people in Vermont, we must invest in the systems already producing results. CTE is not a side pathway. It is central to Vermont's economic future.

Our students are ready. Thank you for standing up for them.