



Attn: Senate Committee on Education
House Committee on Education
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

February 14, 2023

Dear Legislators:

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce supports the Vermont Association of Career and Technical Education Directors (VACTED) in seeking to improve student access to CTE. Despite Vermont's high rate of educational attainment, we are experiencing a prolonged and severe workforce shortage. This is primarily due to our aging demographics but also in part to our failure to address the fundamental skills mismatch. Roughly 70% of the jobs in this state do not require a college degree, but still our education system prioritizes college readiness over career and technical training to prepare students for the in-demand jobs in their communities. We urge you to collaborate with VACTED to make progress on their recommendations.

As the largest statewide business organization, our mission is to advance Vermont's economy which is rooted in small businesses in small communities. Overwhelmingly, the top issue facing our members is the workforce shortage. There are not enough people to fill the open jobs at their businesses, and too few applicants have the needed skills. This shortage is felt most acutely in the trades, where there are too few plumbers to service local hospitality businesses, too few skilled electricians to install electric vehicle chargers, and too few CDL drivers to move goods from point A to point B.

The legislature has long been aware of funding and governance issues in the CTE system which restrict the system's ability to reach more students and sufficiently prepare them to enter the workforce. There have been numerous studies conducted and reports written over the past several years, with recommendations to address the issues. VACTED has proposed the implementation of a new CTE funding system that does not compete with sending schools, which would remove that barrier to access, as well as a governance model change that can significantly and positively impact student access to CTE. We support these recommendations and urge you to engage with VACTED this biennium to act on strengthening the most critical workforce development tool we have.

CTE students are the most likely population to stay in Vermont after completing their education and build long-term careers in this state. We appreciate VACTED and the CTE system's commitment to making a positive difference in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Bishop". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betsy Bishop
President
Vermont Chamber of Commerce