



February 19, 2020

Jay Ramsey
State Director for Career and Technical Education
Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2510

Re: Vermont's Draft Perkins V State Plan

Dear Director Ramsey,

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of continuing to provide resources to support Vermont's career and technical education training programs. As you are aware, employers report a shortage of skilled workers to fill key technical positions. This reality is felt across all industries, but particularly in the trades. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are essential to overcoming the skills gap identified by employers and research organizations like the Vermont Futures Project. They also provide greater opportunity for retaining our youth and retraining older Vermonters.

Mitigating the skills gap through tailored engagement with vulnerable populations is a particularly exciting element of the draft plan. The Vermont Chamber has long believed that no single demographic can fully satisfy our State's workforce needs. Therefore, it is essential that CTE programs are crafted in a way that accounts for the needs of underrepresented and vulnerable populations. Doing so ensures an optimized workforce and helps to secure Vermont's economic wellbeing. CTE is a tool for improving student outcomes, while also preparing both secondary and postsecondary students with the necessary academic, technical, and employability skills required for successful entry into the workforce. Indeed, CTE prepares students for both additional education and career entry.

Also encouraging within the draft plan are goals that would better align CTE pathways with in-demand occupations. Through close collaborating with employers, educational centers are perhaps best positioned to develop curriculum that positions students to be equipped for meaningful and lucrative career fields. While the draft plan addresses many of the Vermont Chamber's existing concerns relating to the future of CTE, we would like to specifically provide the below recommendations:

- Ensure CTE programs account for the unique needs of regional, state, and local labor markets;

- Support effective and meaningful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions and employers;
- Increase student participation in experiential learning opportunities such as industry internships, apprenticeships and mentorships; and promote the use of industry-recognized credentials.
- Ensure that CTE programs are inclusive of vulnerable and underserved populations, doing so is essential to maximizing the workforce potential of Vermont's existing populations.

Vermont is currently facing an annual workforce supply gap of 10,000 workers. It is imperative that we address this problem through programs that both recruit workforce from outside of Vermont and optimize the available workforce within Vermont, Perkins V helps to do this. We look forward to remaining a resource as this plan is finalized and implemented.

Sincerely,

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

Betsy Bishop
President