



Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you for taking the time today to hear and consider testimony on an important aspect of education in our Commonwealth, Career and Technical Education (CTE). The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) would like to express our gratitude to the General Assembly for their focus on Career and Technical Education (CTE). Over the past few years there has been greater flexibility provided to the teacher certification process and increased funding for the CTE subsidy and equipment grants. These efforts have greatly benefited students across the Commonwealth.

The more than 80 Career Technical Centers (CTCs) across Pennsylvania offer tens of thousands of students a unique combination of academic and hand-on-learning programs which can lead to earning industry credentials or certificates for local jobs in high demand, ensuring they graduate on a path to success. CTCs offer a wide variety of programs for career paths, such as nurses, mechanics, electricians, and countless other professions.

While policy changes and investments in CTE have made an impact there is still work to be done. CTCs lack the necessary sustainable and predictable funding to expand or add programs which would meet the needs of their area's employers. Additionally, CTCs are sometimes forced to educate students in outdated facilities with antiquated technology.

CTE programs continue to suffer from a lack of awareness and a stigma that has prevented students becoming interested and enrolling in CTE, which has been difficult to overcome. For some, CTE continues to be thought of only as an option for students who do not want to or plan on attending college. Also, students and parents may not be aware of the many opportunities which are available through their CTC and the benefits of pursuing CTE. Solutions that work to eliminate the stigma surrounding CTE and make the public more aware of the opportunities it provides will help improve student outcomes as well as local and state economies.

Much like their public school counterparts CTCs have experienced staffing shortages. The main reason for this is the certification process which continues to prevent qualified instructors from exploring a career in public education. The flexibility that comes with intern certification has helped, but qualified people in the trades are not going to leave their family sustaining professions to enter a two-year process gain the required teaching certificate. It is imperative that we remove these barriers to entry. PSBA believes that the state should recognize industry credentials as a potential new pathway for skilled professionals to become CTE educators.

Finally, CTCs struggle to add new programs or add more seats to current programs without additional resources. The 2024-25 annual state budget brought a \$30 million increased investment into expanding CTE access and opportunities in the Commonwealth. Further investment in the coming years will continue to yield beneficial results to Pennsylvania's job markets, schools and local economies and combat some of the issues facing CTE.

Increasing access, support and funding towards CTE education is a doorway for many students to excel and take full advantage of their educational experiences. Expanding on the investing and promotion of CTEs statewide is critical to the well-being of our Commonwealth.

Ultimately, the continual investment in CTE means a new generation of highly skilled workers ready to start their careers in Pennsylvania. Building off last year's budget and increasing CTE investments will ease the burdens of local school districts, who often shoulder upwards of 90% of the costs to operate and send students to CTCs and allow taxpayers to see the return of investment by supporting and growing our vibrant workforce.

Career centric education brings many benefits to our students and communities across the Commonwealth and enhancing those opportunities drives education and our economy forward. PSBA looks forward to working with the General Assembly and administration as we continue to address issues impacting our public school community.

Thank you for your time.

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