

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

### **PUBLIC HEARING on**

### **Bill 25-741, “Vocational Education for a New Generation Act of 2024” on Thursday, October 24, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.**

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Robert Henderson. I am here in my individual capacity as Ward 5 member of the State Board of Education, and I am not representing the views of the Board as a whole.

I am grateful to see such widespread interest and support for career and technical education. I think that it is important to present students with a wide range of options including college as well as career pathways that do not require college that will prepare them for successful futures.

I am excited that the State Board of Education has begun research and discussion in anticipation of OSSE’s work on graduation requirements, that I expect will include increased flexibility for students to choose and chart CTE pathways to graduation and postsecondary success.

There are already a lot of great CTE pathways available in DC and I am proud to see Ward 5 schools represented here by Justin Lessek from Sojourner Truth and highlighted in testimony by Dr. Mitchell who mentions Phelps High School. Phelps is what first jumps to my mind when I think of CTE. I once toured Phelps and after five minutes of Dr. Betts rattling off salary scales and placement percentages, I was considering getting a Cisco networking certificate and changing careers, so it is a mystery to me that enrollment isn’t higher than it is. I am also excited about the opportunities offered by the Advanced Technical Center in Ward 5 as well as post-secondary institutions like UDC and Trinity (also in Ward 5 if anyone else is counting).

Yet, I think that these opportunities are undersubscribed and under supported. In addition to setting up a Workforce Ready Program with the flexibility to establish new programs of study in response to workforce trends, I hope that the district can better connect students to and fortify existing CTE opportunities.

One thing that I think we can do is to make it easier for prospective students and families to learn about CTE opportunities through the means that they are most likely to use to learn about schools, which for many is MySchool DC. MySchool DC allows users to filter schools that offer CTE, but that yields 243 schools. We need a way to fine-tune to allow families and students to search for particular programs of interest to find what schools offer them. I think it would also be helpful if MySchool DC school profile pages indicated whether schools enabled students to take courses at the Advanced Technical Center. At the very least, I think that there should be some highly visible link from MySchool DC to OSSE’s Career and Technical Education website, which does offer more granular information on programs of study and where they are available.

Finally, I hope that all relevant parties will make efforts to effectively coordinate the intersections of various programs and initiatives related to CTE including the DME’s Education

Through Employment Data System, OSSE's proposed graduation requirements, the Advanced Technical Center and more. Such coordination might not be easy given the number of agencies involved and the different timelines of the initiatives, but I think it is essential for effectiveness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Henderson

Ward 5 Member, State Board of Education