

**TESTIMONY**  
**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**  
**JULY 16, 2014**  
**UTICA, NEW YORK**

Re: Graduation Pathways related to Career and Technical Education and A8189-C  
Brindisi (MS)

Thank you, I am Doug Leavens president of the Association of Career and Technical Education Administrators of New York State. I am here today on the behalf of the New York State Association of Career and Technical Education (NYSACTE) of which ACTEA is a member. NYSACTE is a membership organization, which represents the interests of seven (7) CTE professional organizations and includes the CTE teachers and administrators who educate over 115,000 students each day.

NYSACTE appreciates the attention given to CTE by the introduction of Assembly Bill 8189 sponsored by Assemblyman Brindisi and the opportunity to provide comment on the Bill and the career readiness needs of the students we serve. While it would appear counterintuitive to our interests, we cannot support the bill in its current form. We believe that a multiple pathways approach to graduation developed by the Board of Regents is the preferred approach to address the College and Career Readiness needs of our students. Such pathways should include the Arts, Humanities, STEM, CTE and Languages other than English.

On the merits of the legislation we are concerned that the creation of a bifurcated two-tier diploma system of college prep and CTE independent of each other would be perceived as unequal. Such a model does not conform to a contemporary model of 21<sup>st</sup> Century career readiness. A modern system would address the career readiness needs of all students and provide a choice from multiple high quality instructional and assessment pathways to achieve a high school diploma.

Our current system fails to acknowledge two realities about school.

First, it no longer engages a great many of our students. The most common response to questions about school from high school students is that it is boring. This engagement crisis leads to a dropout rate of over 25% and leaves students adrift in post secondary degree programs which they abandon at an alarming rate where less than 40% complete two year programs in 4 years and only 50% complete 4 year programs in 6.

Second, it is unconnected to the economic and employment requirements of our business and industry community and the knowledge and skills required of our students for successful employment and adult life.

It is no longer sufficient for a student to graduate from high school with a diploma alone. Diplomas do not define what a student knows and is able to do, what that student is interested in or the skills that they have mastered inclusive of the cognitive, non-cognitive and technical skills required for successful employment and adulthood.

NYSACTE believes that every student should leave our schools with *“A Diploma and Something Else”*. College and Career Readiness is a set of student attributes that are not defined by but enabled through a variety of strongly supported educational programs and structures, which include Career and Technical Education. The member organizations of NYSACTE embrace the following vision for all students as a demonstration that they are College and Career Ready for our 21<sup>st</sup> Century high innovation economy.

- 1. All students upon graduation from high school will have the academic ability to persist and succeed in postsecondary education including corporate training, the military, apprenticeships, certificate programs and degree bearing programs and possess:***

- 2. Earning power in the form of an industry approved entry-level certificate,**
- 3. Career Ready Practices<sup>1</sup> embodied in an employability profile,**
- 4. A defined Career Pathway Plan, and**
- 5. Earned advanced standing and/or dual credit in a postsecondary institution**

To achieve this requires a revision in the graduation course requirements, alternative pathways and flexibility in assessments.

In June of 2013, the Board of Regents reviewed a State Education Department proposal that all students participate in a 15-unit core in grades 9 and 10 and focus in a particular pathway in grades 11 and 12.

The core of the proposal would include course work in Math, Science, Social Studies and Science. In addition, a unit of study each in CTE, the Arts and Languages other than English, two in Physical Education and a half unit each of Health and Financial Literacy. We view the introductory CTE unit and the half unit of financial literacy as critical parts of the career readiness preparation for all students. First, students who take CTE courses in high school and at increasing levels persist in and graduate at higher levels, and the financial literacy needs of our students is critical in a “do it yourself 401k” world. Recent surveys of graduates found that only 1 in 6 had the mastered the basics of financial literacy.

The focus in grades 11 and 12 would provide for increased study in the 5 pathways of the Arts, STEM, CTE, Humanities, and Languages other than English. This would allow students to participate in a series of courses and

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of State Directors of CTE Consortium, Common Career Technical Core

assessments appropriate to the pathway, their interests and sufficient to confirm status as College and Career Ready upon them.

There are however, a number educational and resource issues that should be addressed or considered in implementation of such as system.

Several of these will require the attention of this committee and the legislature. We hope you will turn your attention to them.

First, within the context of constricted resources imposed by the real property tax cap and the Gap Elimination Adjustment we are concerned about equal access to CTE and other pathways to graduation. A multiple pathways model will require adequate funding and other resources to properly support all students including those with disabilities and English Language Learners.

Second, the legislature working with the Executive and the NYS Education Department should create tax incentives that incentivize businesses to support high quality career readiness for all students through regional business engagement with school districts consistent with the Regional Economic Council plan objectives.

The education community led by the Board of Regents should:

1. Hold firm to commonly accepted academic, technical and work ready standards, which allow students to persist and be successful in the various forms of training and education they will require and participate in during their adult life. These include the Common Core State Learning Standards, the Common Career Technical Core inclusive of the Career Ready Practices and an updated version of the NYS Career Development and Occupational Studies standards; and

2. Without increasing the number of assessments required for graduation the Board of Regents should create an alternative mix of assessments including current Regents examinations and approved technical assessments which assess the understandings and skills intended to be developed in the pathway a student participates in; and
3. Provide increased opportunities and incentives for teachers to participate in externships in local business and industry designed to increase their understanding of the connection between their instructional content to the academic, technical and work place skills required for the success of their students upon entry into employment; and
4. Include CTE participation and results, inclusive of the number of earned technical endorsements to diplomas, on school report cards granting CTE equal status with the academic results currently reported.

We are at a point of inflection, at no time in recent memory have government, business and industry, community leaders, the public, parents and the education community been more engaged in deep reflection upon what it means to be College and Career Ready. The time for action is now. The Legislature, the Board of Regents and the Executive need to seize this advantage and provide the multiple pathways to high school graduation that will secure economic and social advantages for our communities, state and nation and the students who will live and work in them.

Greater Detail on our position can be found in the material submitted in conjunction with our testimony including: ***A Position Paper of the New York State Association***

***for Career and Technical Education CAREERS - GET READY! and  
Recommendations for Developing College and Career Ready Students, from July  
2013.***

Once again, on behalf of NYSACTE we are pleased that you have afforded us the opportunity to provide commentary on Assembly Bill 8189 and stand ready to advise and work with you on behalf of the students we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony at this hearing. I would be happy to answer your questions.

Respectfully,

Douglas Leavens, President

Association for Career and Technical Education Administrators

Member of the Advisory Council

New York State Association of Career and Technical Education