

Testimony to the Basic Education Funding Commission

Thomas Allen
Administrative Director, Eastern Center for Arts and Technology
President, Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Allen, Administrative Director of the Eastern Center for Arts and Technology in Willow Grove, PA and the President of the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA). Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Eastern Center for Arts and Technology (EASTERN) as well as for the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA). EASTERN serves 460 secondary and 520 adult career and technical students in Eastern Montgomery County. EASTERN is a two-year program with 13 career programs. PACTA serves to support administrators of Career and Technical Education Centers and High Schools through leadership, advocacy and service.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) has changed significantly since the days when we were called “Vocational Education” and “Vo-Techs”. Schools now are call Career and Technical Centers (CTC’s), Technical Institutes or Centers for Arts and Technology. We work hard to develop a skilled, sustainable workforce that is well prepared for high-skill and high-paying jobs of today and tomorrow. Our schools improve the educational experience for students in high school by providing an engaging, relevant education that reduces dropout rates and improves student achievement. We help students discover the career options available to them, engage them in educational activities, and certify their performance. We work directly with business and industry to ensure that CTE programs are developing people with the skills, credentials and

technical knowledge necessary to keep America on the leading edge of innovation and global competitiveness.

CTE programs go far beyond just preparing students for jobs. We prepare a knowledgeable workforce by making sure students know the difference between a job and a career, how and where to look for employment, how to advance skills after high school, where to find postsecondary educational opportunities and what industry credentials to obtain. We prepare students with lifelong leadership skills through student organizations such as SkillsUSA, HOSA, FBLA and FFA. We prepare students to become college and career ready so they have a lifetime of success.

Yes we have changed and we are proud of what CTE does for the youth in Pennsylvania schools. Yet we have a silent killer. CTE Funding. Funding for CTE schools is very different than school districts. Revenue for Career and Technology Centers is provided predominantly by two sources: The State of Pennsylvania and by participating school districts. Pennsylvania provides vocational subsidy and grants. At Eastern Center for Arts and Technology (EASTERN), our secondary revenue is approximately \$7.8 million dollars. Of that \$7.8 million dollars the state provides roughly \$253,000 in vocational subsidy and \$320,000 in grants. That is approximately 3% and 4% respectively. School districts, participating at EASTERN, make payments based on student enrollment. Of the \$7.8 million dollars in revenue at EASTERN, \$6.4 is paid by the participating districts. That is approximately 81% of total revenue. As you can see, the largest source of revenue to operate CTE schools comes from the participating school districts. The guidelines that establish the percentage of revenue requested from each district are called

Articles of Agreement. These agreements vary from school to school but for the most part, school districts are billed for their portion of the revenue based on student enrollment at the CTE School. Basically, the larger a school districts percentage of students at a CTC, the greater the districts portion of the bill.

As you can see, this funding arrangement creates a disincentive to send students to CTE schools. Compare it to your electric bill, the more you use the more it costs. When your budget gets tight, you look for ways to reduce electrical consumption. Much like your electric bill, when school district budgets get tight, they look for ways to reduce their financial burden. I am not suggesting a student, committed to attend a CTE school, is denied access. Districts I have worked with value CTE schools and send students that can benefit from a CTE education. But, Act 1 has greatly impacted school districts ability to maintain important curricular programs such as CTE. Schools have tightened their belts and become more fiscally efficient. School Districts, facing an Act 1 mandate, typically ask CTE schools to keep expenditures within the Act 1 guidelines. In a spirit of cooperation, most CTE schools comply with the request. But, when a district increases enrollment at a CTE school, they will subsequently be facing a larger bill due to increased student participation and that increase does not fit well into an Act 1 budget framework. If we value the benefits CTE brings to the educational system, we need to relieve school districts of the strain a CTE program brings to their budget.

I would ask you consider a revision to the current method of funding Career and Technical Education Schools so that the Commonwealth's CTE Schools are able to provide the programs that students and employers need without creating an unfair hardship on school districts. A

reasonable revision would reduce the extra costs borne by a school district to send students to a Career and Technical School. Thank you for having me here today.