Funding for Career and Technical Education

The state should increase support for career and technical education by raising the $30,000 aidable salary ceiling in BOCES Aid and through a corresponding increase in Special Services Aid for non-BOCES districts.

The Board of Regents has embarked on a review of high school graduation requirements. One goal of this exercise should be to assure that all students have access to opportunities which will genuinely prepare them to succeed at whatever they pursue after high school.

Career and technical education programs have proven their effectiveness at preparing students for success in high school and beyond: in 2018-19, over 96% of students who participated in BOCES CTE programs graduated from high school with over 50% of those graduates going on to college. Another 35% of CTE participants were employed after graduation. Students with disabilities are much more likely to earn a high school diploma if they participate in CTE.

Many BOCES CTE programs enable students to earn college credit while still in high school and over 5,800 businesses give BOCES students workplace experiences.

But too many districts are unable to provide all the CTE opportunities that they, their students, and their local employers desire. The facilities, equipment, and instructional staff necessary to provide exceptional CTE opportunities are simply not scalable for school districts with generally low enrollments. BOCES provide the economies of scale necessary to offer these opportunities, but this comes with a cost.

The portion of BOCES salaries that state aid reimburses has been capped at $30,000 since the early 1990s. The State Education Department estimates that the actual average salary of BOCES CTE salaries is $65,000. Funding for Special Services Aid has also not kept pace with true program costs. Special Services Aid is the analogue to BOCES Aid for the “Big 5” cities and other districts not part of a BOCES.

In past budget cycles, both the Assembly and Senate have approved budgets which would have increased BOCES Aid and Special Services Aid for CTE programs. We join with partners in education and business to ask that you do so again in the state budget for 2020-21 and urge the Executive to reach an agreement.