

2025 -- H 5292

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Introduced By: Representatives Fellela, Serpa, Read, and Phillips

Date Introduced: February 05, 2025

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-45-6.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-45 entitled "Regional
2 Vocational Schools [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is
3 hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **16-45-6.1. Career and technical education.**

5 (a) The general assembly finds that career and technical education ("CTE") programs that
6 meet the CTE board of trustees' industry developed standards prepare Rhode Island's students to
7 succeed in a wide variety of employment settings are a critical component of the state's public
8 education system and a necessary element of the state's economic development. CTE programs
9 that meet the CTE board of trustees' standards are located in the regional career and technical
10 education centers and comprehensive high schools and are helping students graduate high school
11 with the skills to secure a job with a family-sustaining wage.

12 (b) The general assembly further finds that the proportion of students now enrolled in such
13 programs is inadequate to meet the needs of Rhode Island's growing economy. Rhode Island's
14 employers are best positioned to assist in establishing a high-quality system of secondary and
15 postsecondary career and technical education. To assist in the development of a high-quality system
16 of CTE, the CTE board of trustees shall review and annually provide recommendations to the board
17 of education regarding issues impacting secondary and postsecondary career and technical
18 education, including, but not limited to, program quality, industry alignment, the effective use of
19 state and federal CTE funding, the allocation of CTE funding, and expenditures of CTE funding,

1 program outcomes, work-based learning, transportation, and graduation requirements. The report
2 and recommendations shall be provided to the board of education no later than October 15 of each
3 year.

4 (c) [Deleted by P.L. 2021, ch. 278, § 1 and P.L. 2021, ch. 279, § 1.]

5 (d)(1) To sustain and advance the economic development of our communities, all students
6 retain the right to enroll in a state approved career and technical education program approved by
7 the CTE board of trustees in communities outside their community of residence. This right does
8 not apply to locally developed CTE programs, locally approved CTE programs, pathway programs,
9 or other programs that are not approved by the CTE board of trustees. Students shall have a right
10 to request enrollment and to enroll in a CTE board of trustees' approved program outside of their
11 community of residence when a substantially similar or same ("substantially similar") CTE board
12 of trustees approved program is not offered within their community of residence.

13 (2) In determining whether two programs are substantially similar, the CTE board of
14 trustees shall consider the following factors:

15 (i) Program type;

16 (ii) Information on the occupation that the student will be prepared for;

17 (iii) The credentials the student will earn;

18 (iv) The type of work-based learning that the student will be provided access to;

19 (v) The ability to access advanced course experiences; and

20 (vi) Such additional factors as the CTE board of trustees deem to be relevant, including
21 postsecondary attainment, industry partnerships and advisory boards, and program quality.

22 (3) Effective January 15, 2022, and every year thereafter, the CTE board of trustees and
23 the department of elementary and secondary education shall publish a detailed list of substantially
24 similar CTE programs for the upcoming school year. The list will be used to support students and
25 their families in accessing CTE board of trustees approved career and technical education
26 programs. There will be a thirty-day (30) period for schools and districts to appeal the substantially
27 similar designation to the board of education.

28 (4) Students enrolled in, accepted to, or attending a state CTE board-approved program
29 (the "program of choice") prior to January 1, 2022, which program is outside of their home district
30 but is considered to be substantially similar to a program in their home district, shall be allowed to
31 remain enrolled in that program of choice as set forth in subsection (j) of this section.

32 (e) Students may request access to state CTE board-approved career preparation programs
33 outside their school district if their home district does not provide a substantially similar state-
34 approved CTE program. If a discrepancy exists as to whether two (2) state-approved programs are

1 substantially similar, the state CTE board shall use state CTE board program quality criteria set
2 forth in subsection (d) of this section to determine if the two (2) state CTE board-approved
3 programs are substantially similar programs. The decision of the CTE board shall be final.

4 (f)(1) A student's request to enroll in an out of district state CTE board-approved career
5 and technical program shall not be denied, provided that:

6 (i) A substantially similar program is not available in the student's home district;

7 (ii) The student meets any other criteria required of all students for admission to the out of
8 district program and the center; and

9 (iii) When there is more than one recognized CTE program in a transportation region, the
10 student is applying to the center that is geographically the closest program to the student's
11 residence.

12 (g)(1) Students requesting access to state CTE board-approved career preparation programs
13 outside their established school transportation region may enroll in such programs that are not
14 substantially similar to a program in their home district. In such event, with respect to transportation
15 costs, the resident's local education agency shall only be responsible for paying the resident
16 district's average per pupil expenditure for student transportation for all students in the district. The
17 receiving district shall pay any remaining balance due for transportation costs associated with the
18 particular student.

19 (2) The sending district shall pay the average of the per-pupil expenditure of the receiving
20 district and sending district when paying out-of-district tuitions for students in CTE programs.

21 (3) When two or more substantially similar programs are available within a student's
22 transportation district, that student may enroll in the program that is not geographically closest only
23 if the receiving district agrees to pay all the transportation costs to and from the receiving district.

24 (h) All eligible CTE programs shall align to CTE board of trustees' program standards.
25 Programs that do not meet this standard shall not be eligible to enroll out-of-district students and
26 receive state or federal CTE funding.

27 (i) All state CTE board-approved programs shall align to industry standards or be
28 associated with a nationally recognized CTE board-approved program.

29 (j) Students enrolled in, accepted to, or attending a state CTE board-approved program of
30 choice outside of the students' home district as of January 1, 2022, shall be exempt from the
31 substantially similar provisions of this section and may continue to matriculate in grades nine (9)
32 through twelve (12) in their program of choice so that students and parents who made educational
33 decisions prior to January 1, 2022, shall retain the rights that were in place when they made those
34 decisions. If a substantially similar state-approved program is established in a student's home

1 district after the student has enrolled in a program of choice, the student may continue to matriculate
2 in grades nine (9) through twelve (12) in the student's program of choice provided the student
3 remains enrolled in the program. The sending district may request, and shall be provided by the
4 district with the chosen CTE program, information on the students' progress in programs, including
5 attendance and grades. The provisions of this subsection shall also apply and extend to other
6 siblings in the family who apply to attend the same program of choice.

7 (k) Career and technical funds allocated under § 16-7.2-6 shall be used solely for the
8 purpose of funding improvements to state CTE board-approved career and technical education
9 programs and facilities or for funding related to the establishment of new career and technical
10 programs in our state.

11 (l) The limitations related to enrollment in CTE programs contained within this chapter
12 shall not apply to the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center or the William M. Davies,
13 Jr. Career and Technical High School. All eligible students, from any and all Rhode Island cities
14 and towns, have the right to pursue enrollment and enroll in, subject to applicable enrollment
15 procedures, the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center or the William M. Davies, Jr.
16 Career and Technical High School's programs.

17 (m) Provided, effective July 1, 2025, any data collection and reporting for individual
18 students, that is required as part of the basic education program regulations data collection
19 including, but not limited to, data required pursuant to the provisions of chapter 7 and 7.2 of title
20 16, shall be the responsibility of the school district, wherein the student is attending and enrolled
21 in a career and technical education program, sometimes colloquially referred to as the "receiving
22 district," and not the responsibility of what is sometimes known as the student's "sending district."

23 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO EDUCATION -- REGIONAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

1 This act would require that the basic education program data collection information for
2 students that attend career and technical education schools be charged to the receiving school
3 district and not the sending school district.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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