

February 27, 2019

Summary of Testimony to the Vermont State Senate Education Committee
by Heidi Peterson on behalf of

S63 An act relating to expanding dual enrollment to students who attend schools outside of Vermont

I was very excited to learn about the Dual Enrollment voucher program through Act 77 when it passed back in 2013 and have known friends and acquaintances who have benefitted from this opportunity. The flexibility and educational support provided to Vermont 11th and 12th graders by this program is really wonderful.

In August 2018, my daughter, a rising high school senior from Stamford, VT, decided that she would like to complete her high school diploma through the Dual Enrollment program. Our Stamford School District, in the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union, does not have a high school. All high school students are tuitioned into other high schools, with all but a few students attending Drury High School, McCann Technical School, or Mount Greylock Regional High School in adjacent Massachusetts, due to both geographical and community orientations.

My daughter had administrative, guidance, and academic support for her Dual Enrollment educational plan from the Stamford principal (who coordinates the high school student enrollments for the district), the principal of her high school (Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, MA) her guidance counselor, and the dual enrollment coordinators from a choice of two different institutions appropriate for and available to her, CCV Bennington and Southern Vermont College in Bennington.

My daughter and other Stamford residents following typical Stamford high school options, **meet the voucher program guidelines for**

- Being a Vermont resident
- Completed grade 10, but has not yet received a high school diploma
- Attends a school that is publically funded
- Has approval from the high school principal
- Has dual enrollment included in her personal learning plan

In spite of meeting all these core requirements of the program, Stamford students, and likely students from other towns, including Readsboro, Vermont and possibly other towns that have school choice and no designated high school, **are not eligible because**

- the school is not a Vermont public school, although Vermont students, tuitioned by Vermont districts, attend these schools in Massachusetts
- these school choice schools, attended by the majority of the high school students in the district, are not “designated” high schools for the town. According to the State Department of Education, there are only two out of state designated schools for Vermont students- Granville and Salem, NY.
- The high school is not recognized as an eligible school and does not have a formal dual enrollment participation agreement with the Vermont Department of Education and there is, according to the department, no mechanism for applying for dual enrollment participation by an out of state school.

- Given that currently only 2 students (the number varies each year, but is often small) attend Mount Greylock Regional High School from Stamford, it is unlikely the school would be willing to become registered as a dual enrollment participant if an application mechanism were available, even though they are very supportive of dual enrollment and willingly coordinate with the Dual Enrollment Coordinator at CCV (as well as at Massachusetts colleges for Massachusetts residents).

What is the remedy requested?

- Change the eligibility to include all Vermont high school students who meet the other requirements and attend a public school funded by their Vermont school district
- Add the alternative mechanism for dual enrollment coordination- if the student is attending a public school outside of Vermont, the requirement for the school to be enrolled in the Vermont dual enrollment program and have a dual enrollment coordinator is waived if the student is attending a participating Vermont college that has a dual enrollment coordinator and the Principal, guidance counselor, or designee from the out-of-state high school maintains active communication and coordination of the educational program with the student and the Dual Enrollment Coordinator at the college where the student is dually enrolled.
- Make this change in provisions retroactive to August 2018, as no student or parent seeking participation in the program from Stamford VT could reasonably have foreseen that this statewide program, open to all Vermont high school juniors and seniors, would not be open to Stamford students or others whose districts have similar arrangements due to the geographical and community layout and the schooling arrangements for its high school students.

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Of note:

Some officials have suggested that a student from Stamford or another community with a similar district situation could participate in the Vermont Dual Enrollment program by transferring to another high school that participates in the program. While this is possible, it also requires a disruption in the educational program of a student, severing connections with teachers, peers, and administrators that have been a fundamental part of a student's education so the student can take advantage of an advancement opportunity open to students from other communities in Vermont without such sacrifice. Since the voucher program only allows students to take two classes at the college level, the remainder of the credits would have to be met through the new high school and the courses and credits may not align well with the program of study the student has been pursuing for the previous 2-3 years. This clearly is not in line with the Vermont educational goals of providing students with individual educational plans.

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