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PAGE 1

Q1: Please enter your first and last name.

First NameLucas

Last NameLussier

Q2: Comment:

Thank you, Co-Chairs and Members of the Working Group for allowing me to submit this written testimony. My name is Lucas Lussier and I am the Business Manager at The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, also known as The Met School. I am writing today to provide input about the funding formulas impact to the state operated schools. As I am sure you will agree, it is of utmost importance to the State, its economy, and its residents, that we ensure that the state's career and technical schools remain financially viable and able to provide career and technical education to the students that we serve and acknowledge the higher costs associated with providing career and technical education. As you know, the Rhode Island Education Funding Formula was implemented in Fiscal year 2012. However, it was long before this time, in January of 2010 to be exact, that The Met was running budget calculations, researching other states funding formulas, and corresponding with RIDE and Dr. Wong at Brown University, in an effort to estimate, in advance, the new formulas impact on our school. Shortly after this time, we began to see the true impact and when it was published in the Providence Journal on June 17, 2010 that the Met was receiving the largest reduction in state aid than any other school district, 63.04%, we knew that our future was in jeopardy. Because of the work and research that we did in preparation for the implementation of the funding formula, The Met has been able to make the necessary financial and operational changes to get through the first five years of the funding formula. We did so by reducing expenses approximately \$2.3 million by freezing all salaries, terminating positions, eliminating social security contributions, re-organizing our IT operations, instituting salary caps, and reducing and/or eliminating programs. The Met also increased enrollment during this term, from 629 students to 837 students which has generated an additional \$1.4 million in revenue to support our budget. Basically, we are doing more with less and it is impacting the mission and philosophy that the state and general assembly supported when they established the Met as an innovative career and technical model through legislation in 1996. But the worst is yet to come. According to the funding formula, reductions in state aid would be spread over a ten year term and local aid, which represents tuition that is now paid to the Met by the sending districts, would be phased in over a five year period. Therefore, next year, we face a financial cliff. Per the most recent estimates, the Met will continue receiving a reduction in state aid of \$616,000 each year for the next five years, a total of \$3,080,000 by FY2021, with no addition inflow of local aid. With that stated, The Met was and still is in support of the funding formula as a fair and equitable means of calculating how education in Rhode Island is funded and most importantly that the money follows the student. Unfortunately, the funding for CTE, specifically to state operated schools, is inadequate. CTE instruction costs significantly more than any other form of instruction. A national survey on state funding practices indicates that the relative cost of vocational education range from 20-40% higher than that of traditional academic instruction. Currently, 39 states recognize this additional cost and provide, on average, 20% more funding for their CTE programs as compared to traditional academic instruction. In fact, according to the Director of Finance at the Massachusetts Department of Education, Roger Hatch, the foundation budget for vocational schools such as Worcester Tech, takes into account the larger expenses of vocational schools. "For the fiscal year 2014 schools, the foundation rate for a vocational school in Mass is \$12,894 and that compares to a senior high (traditional public school) \$8,456." This means that Mass CTE's are funded 34.42% more than a traditional high. The Met greatly appreciate RIDE's, the states and the general assembly's efforts in creating and funding the CTE categorical fund which allocates funding to help offset the higher than average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies necessary for maintaining CTE program. From this allocation, the Met received \$329 per pupil last year. However, how can the states CTE's expand and/or improve their CTE programs to match those in our neighboring states when the amount of CTE funding allocated to them is not, known in advance, perpetual, guaranteed and adequate.

Incorporating a weight into the funding formula as would provide the financial support that is need for our schools to succeed, remain competitive and be an economic driver for the state of Rhode Island. Thank you for your time and consideration

Q3: By submitting this comment, you understand and acknowledge that your name and your comment will become available to the public as part of the public record.

Yes, I understand that my name along with my comment will be part of the public record and will represent me when shared or posted online.