



a closer LOOK



The 2022-23 state budget: The need for increases to support career and technical education

Career and technical education (CTE) provides a unique combination of academic, technical and hands-on skill-building that prepares a student to either immediately enter the workforce or better define career plans as they enter postsecondary education. Each year thousands of Pennsylvania students will have already earned higher education credits, completed a pre-apprenticeship or gained on-the-job skills before graduation thanks to the CTE path they chose in high school. Unfortunately, a lack of sustained state investments often leaves school districts in a position to limit the number of students they can afford to send to a career and technical education center (CTC).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a new set of challenges for CTE programs, which worsened the issues of student opportunity and access. In addition, the workforce suffered a blow from the public health crisis, highlighting the importance of frontline workers in essential industries, such as childcare staff, nurses and health care workers, and commercial transportation personnel— all of whom are trained in CTE programs. These current challenges underscore why we need increased state investments in our state budget’s basic education funding and CTE subsidy lines: to promote greater access to programming, restore the workforce and boost our state economy.



School districts and career and technical education centers are seeking a minimum of \$25 million in the 2022-23 state budget for career and technical education (CTE) programs, with funding appropriated through the career and technical education subsidy.

School districts shoulder 90% of the costs to send students to CTCs

The state's share of the cost for a student to access CTE programming at a career and technical center represents less than 8% of the bill. Federal Carl D. Perkins funding only covers roughly 2%. That leaves member school districts at the local level paying approximately 90% of the costs to send students to CTCs, which is a significant driver in students' ability to access programming. Therefore, to increase access and lessen the local burden, the state must increase its share by investing more in the career and technical education subsidy line (CTES) in the annual state budget.

State support for CTE has remained stagnant

After a decade of stalled growth, momentum for increased state investments was recognized in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 budgets with a combined \$20 million investment. This funding was split, with \$17 million driven through the CTES and \$3 million into the equipment grant line. However, this momentum came to a halt in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 budgets when CTCs were flat-funded at the 2019-20 level.

Federal funding doesn't address long-term access issues in PA

While there have been several rounds of nonrecurring federal stimulus funding provided to education since the start of the pandemic, most of these dollars were driven directly to school districts, with minimal support provided directly to CTE. While the infusion of federal funding was integral for supporting CTE during the pandemic, the amount pales compared to the financial responsibility shouldered by school districts. Additionally, this federal funding is a one-time allocation and does not address the ongoing costs faced by CTCs. Because CTCs provide specialized services and equipment, federal pandemic funding does not fill the gaps necessary to sustain programs and increase opportunities for student access in the future. Further, it fails to address the issue of access to CTE for students and does not provide a financial incentive for districts to send students.

State support for CTE is key for student success, strong economy

Increasing access to career and technical education means training a new generation of workers. A failure to adequately fund CTE is a failure to support our workforce and our economy more broadly.

According to the Association for Career and Technical Education's (ACTE) [March 2022 fact sheet](#), the Pennsylvania economy is experiencing a skills gap:

- 53% of jobs in Pennsylvania require skills training – more education than high school but less than a four-year degree.
- 42% of Pennsylvania workers are trained at this level.

Students enrolled in CTE in Pennsylvania develop technical, academic and employability skills and engage in work-based experiences with industry partners. While federal support has been welcomed and appreciated, these dollars do not address the ongoing, systemic funding issue we face in Pennsylvania. We must prioritize both basic education and CTE funding in the upcoming FY 2022-23 state budget. Increasing basic education funding will help ease the burden of costs for local school districts and incentivizes them to expand student access to career and technical education.

With no state investments over the last two fiscal years, supporting at least a \$25 million increase for the CTE subsidy line is critical to ensure Pennsylvania is back on track for building a vibrant workforce that can strengthen our economy.

Note: Information in this publication was obtained with permission from the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA) and edited for use by PSBA.