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Thank you for your commitment and the work you do to prepare students to be successful in their pursuits of their individual and exciting futures.

As Vermont employers concerned about workforce development, we are writing to ask for your help in ensuring that every single student who graduates in the state can look forward to a future they can be proud of. This letter is a request for partnership and action.

We want to ensure that your students are not missing out on opportunities that can lead to fulfilling careers. The economy is changing, and while many recent graduates struggle to get their careers off the ground, employers like us can't find enough people who have the technical training to fill high skilled jobs in the trades.

The Vermont Department of Labor, Economic Labor Market Information Division, estimates automotive service technicians and mechanics will be among the top twenty-five occupations with the highest number of job openings statewide through 2024. In fact, the division identified both automotive service technicians and diesel engine specialists as high-demand occupations in Vermont for 2016 based on the large number of job openings for these positions.

We are talking about jobs that pay well and offer plenty of opportunities for people to advance and build a successful career doing something they love. But old stereotypes and stigmas, and a system that often undervalues career paths that don't require a two-or four-year degree, are keeping students from even considering these jobs, much less getting the training they need.

As employers, we will continue to promote the skilled trades and high-quality technical schools as a valuable path to career success. But we can't do it alone. If we're serious about helping students find success, our perceptions of what constitutes a good job and how to prepare for it must adapt.

Together, let's work to undo long-held stigmas that limit opportunity and stifle potential. Let's open minds to opportunities available in the skilled trades. Let's encourage students who might be a fit to consider technical schools that do the right thing and have strong student outcomes.

Like you, we want all of Vermont's young people to find success and fulfilling careers. We invite you to talk to us – one of the many employers looking for quality employees – and tour local technical schools to help us shift the current perceptions plaguing the skilled trades. We look forward to your support and partnership.

Sincerely,

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