

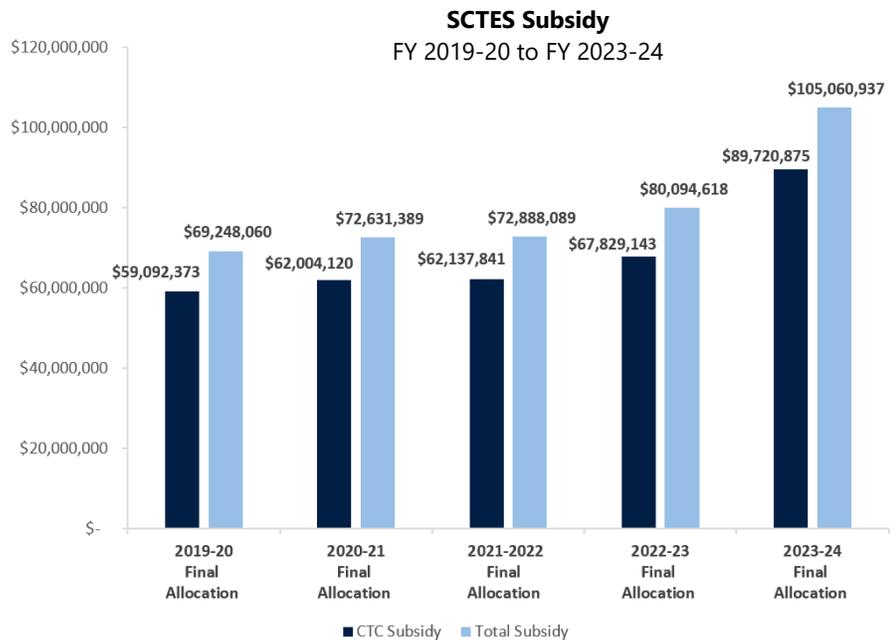
Barriers to Career & Technical Education

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House Resolution 2024-481 directs the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to conduct a study to identify barriers to student acceptance into career and technical (CTE) programs and recommend how to address those barriers.

- ❖ **Pennsylvania's Career and Technical Education (CTE) system encompasses 87 Career and Technical Centers (CTCs) and 127 school districts, providing over 1,800 approved programs of study.** Secondary CTE programs integrate academic knowledge with technical and practical skills designed for specific industries. Secondary students primarily participate in CTE programs through CTCs, which oversee almost 80 percent of programs.
- ❖ **To identify barriers students face in accessing CTE programs, we developed and released a survey to all CTCs and school districts with CTE programming.** We received 128 responses for an overall response rate of 65.3 percent. Our respondents included 89.0 percent of all CTCs in the state (65) and 51.2 percent of all school districts that offer CTE (63).
- ❖ **Survey responses show that waitlists for CTE programs have risen by 150.6 percent in recent years.** The total number of students on waitlists for CTE programs increased from 2,930 in FY 2019-20 to 7,343 in FY 2024-25, with 52.3 percent (67) of LBFC's survey respondents reporting waitlists in the most recent school year.
- ❖ **Many factors influence waitlist numbers.** Our survey asked respondents what factors contribute to their waitlists. Of the 67 respondents with waitlists, 65 (97.0 percent) indicated that physical capacity limitations were a contributing factor, with 26 (38.8 percent) citing facility conditions, and 14 (21.0 percent) citing instructor shortages or vacancies.
- ❖ **The availability of CTE programming to roughly 450,000 secondary students in PA is widely varied.** The number of CTE programs in Pennsylvania increased by 5.6 percent from FY 2022-23 to FY 2024-25, but some areas had more programs and a greater variety than others.
- ❖ **PDE categorizes CTE programs into 14 career clusters, each with varying availability.** The Architecture and Construction career cluster had the most programs, with 320. The Marketing, Sales, and Service career cluster had the fewest, with 30.

- ❖ **We found that many secondary students have no access to programs in three specific career clusters:**
 - *Business, Management, and Administration:* 339,364 students across 421 school districts without programs.
 - *Education and Training:* 324,296 students across 400 school districts without programs.
 - *Marketing, Sales, and Service:* 313,248 students across 414 school districts without programs.
- ❖ **The state-funded Secondary Career and Technical Education Subsidy (SCTES) seeks to offset costs related to CTE administration through formula-based allocations.** The subsidy amount awarded has increased by 51.8 percent over the past five years, rising from \$69.2 million in FY 2019-20 to \$105 million in FY 2023-24.



- ❖ **The SCTES has historically covered between 8 and 10 percent of total program costs on average. Local schools are responsible for nearly 90 percent of the funding.** The SCTES subsidy increased by 51.7 percent from FY 2019-20 to FY 2023-24, from \$69.2 million to \$105 million.
- ❖ **The education required for instructional CTE certification can be expensive.** Only four universities offer CTE teacher certification programs. On average, we estimated the cost to obtain a CTE Instructional Certificate I (18 credits) at \$11,691 and a CTE Instructional Certificate II (42 credits) at \$27,279, for a total of approximately \$38,970.

- ❖ **Pennsylvania has experienced a 19.5 percent decrease in CTE instructors since 2020.** Despite this, the state’s secondary CTE student-to-teacher ratio has remained relatively low compared to other states, only slightly surpassing a ratio of 17:1 during the scope of our study.

Total Number of Secondary CTE Instructors

State	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Change 2020 to 2024
Colorado	670	730	810	770	-	14.9%
Delaware	-	580	510	430	560	3.4
Maryland	680	740	660	650	450	33.8
New Jersey	960	950	1,710	1,540	2,370	146.9
New York	4,740	5,380	5,680	6,070	6,260	32.1
Ohio	5,250	4,390	4,490	2,960	4,960	5.5
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	4,110	4,110	3,530	4,390	3,310	19.5
West Virginia	340	790	960	960	780	129.4
National Total	73,530	84,360	88,280	90,070	104,450	42.1

- ❖ **Many states, including Pennsylvania, have implemented policy initiatives to address declining numbers of CTE instructors.** These strategies include creating alternative pathways to certification and providing grants to teachers for high-need subjects, such as CTE.

Our report recommendations include...

1. The Pennsylvania Department of Education should require CTE providers to report the waitlists for each program by classification of instructional program (CIP) code within the Career and Technical Information System (CATS) to allow for future analysis of waitlist trends by program and career cluster.
2. The General Assembly should consider a competitive needs-based grant program for CTE facility expansion to help address rising waitlists for high-demand programs.
3. The General Assembly should consider passing legislation to create tiered SCTES allocations based on in-demand career clusters.
4. Joint operating committees should consider covering CTE instructor certification costs to reduce the financial burden on prospective CTE instructors.
5. Given that the Pennsylvania Department of Education allows a candidate to have multiple years of teaching experience with Emergency and Intern Certifications, the Department should establish an option for CTE instructors for in-demand careers that allows them to replace some educational credits for years of teaching experience for an Instructional II Certificate, as determined by PDE, to ensure the candidate has sufficient education in pedagogy while reducing some of the 42 credit hour requirement.