

Testimony Regarding HB 512

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Thank you, Chairman Blessing and Committee Members. I offer testimony today regarding House Bill 512 on behalf of Ohio's apprenticeship community. The adoption of House Bill 512 will go a long way to assure the nation's second largest apprenticeship system will have the opportunity to continue to grow as the demands for highly skilled technical workers skyrocket in our great state.

At its most basic elements, apprenticeship is a supply chain where foundationally qualified participants serve a three to five year apprenticeship using both on the job training and related technical instruction to become highly skilled, technically astute workers who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be assets to their employers and Ohio for decades to come. It is unfortunate that this ancient and successful workforce development model still is derided by those who see a four year degree pathway as the only means to success for young Ohioans. This legislation will go a long way to remove the stigma to which Ohio's apprenticeship system still is burdened in some circles.

Perhaps the most far reaching educational reform in the last several decades has been the adoption of College Credit Plus. This program has removed barriers for deserving Ohio students, a student who is deemed college ready should be able to enroll in college courses without regard to age. This program has aided Ohio working families immeasurably, providing their children a leg up to the next step in their lives at no cost to the family; this value cannot be overstated. Most importantly for apprenticeship, College Credit Plus is not entirely focused on the four-year degree track, this program provides an important means for apprenticeship programs to reach down to secondary schools and allow students to meaningfully build apprenticeship careers – a truly extraordinary leap from where apprenticeship was five years ago.

This legislation building on the success of the 2007 reorganization of the Department of Higher Education and also builds on the unqualified success of the College Credit Plus program. Combining secondary, post-secondary and workforce transformation in one silo with an accountable governance structure will allow Ohio's educational system to become more responsive and more accepting of successful "non-traditional" workforce development models such as apprenticeship. I just hope the new Department of Learning and Achievement will find a place for Apprentice Ohio and the Ohio State Apprenticeship Council one day.

Once again, thank you Mr. Chairman – supporting this legislation is the right thing to do for young Ohioans and Ohio's business.