

February 27, 2018

Testimony on House Bill 512



Chairman Blessing and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Dennis Franks and I am the Superintendent of Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center as well as a Board Member for the Office of Workforce Transformation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 512.

As an education and workforce development professional with over 35 years of experience, I am honored to work in such an educationally-diverse state with numerous options for students regardless of their age or educational level.

I have first-hand experience seeing the difference that a focused, career-based education can make in the lives of students and the businesses that support us and utilize their skills. Additionally, I've experienced the positives that businesses can achieve when they utilize training developed specifically for their workers.

That said, I believe our current system makes collaboration, between each level, difficult and makes it easy to blame perceived shortcomings on another level rather than working cooperatively to ensure that Ohio's workforce and education systems are second to none. I see this bill as an opportunity to remove some of the silos which have kept us from operating at maximum effectiveness for quite some time.

As a board member for the Office of Workforce Transformation, many of the initiatives, which were developed and vetted with input from several sectors, have failed to be implemented as designed. I believe one reason is the separation that occurs when we are divided into various silos – a problem which this bill looks to eliminate.

There are many examples of the perceived opportunities one entity may have while another entity does not, "K12 can do this, and we can't," "Higher Ed has access to that, and we don't," "the OWT doesn't understand how its recommendations affect our specific area." I could cite specifics, but suffice to say, there are many.

It's my understanding the new system this bill creates will actually function much the same way my specific career center operates. As superintendent, I have a director to oversee the secondary side of my operations, a director to oversee the post-secondary side of the operations, and the treasurer's office to handle all the fiscal and regulatory aspects. The board of education represents the local business and education needs of my community and assists in district goal setting, which in turn my leadership team and I work to implement. The collaboration between the various entities, which is coordinated and directed by the superintendent, is the vehicle that drives the entire organization.

Therefore, using that analogy....

The Director of the Department of Learning and Achievement essentially is the Superintendent, with various assistant directors charged with implementing the specific goals and missions, while the reformulated State Board of Education ensures compliance, much like our treasurer's office.

I understand many of the concerns about these proposed changes. Many people will see this as a diminishing role for each entity. However, that's not my understanding of how this is to be implemented. I see the new Director of the Department of Learning and Achievement being a facilitator of the various entities. That person/department will work to ensure the lines of communication remain open and the entities work together for their missions and goals. Differing goals may arise from time to time, but the underlining mission of each entity will remain and the emphasis will be how each entity's area of expertise correlates to the goals. This will ultimately lead to higher educational attainment for our population and more economic success for the state.

I believe this recommendation makes the business of educating our students, as they travel the ladder of educational attainment, more manageable. This will enable us to better prepare the workforce of tomorrow, which gives Ohioans more and better opportunities and our state continued economic growth. The goal of HB 512 should be to allow those of us in the field, along with the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and the Office of Workforce Transformation to work together more effectively to improve the lives of all Ohioans.

Thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have about my testimony or thoughts on the proposal.