



Ohio House of Representatives

Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

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Bill Wittman, Superintendent of Tri-County Career Center

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, My name is Bill Wittman and I am the Superintendent at Tri-County Career Center in Nelsonville, Ohio. Tri-County encompasses the areas of Athens, Hocking and the southern half of Perry counties, serving the workforce development and educational needs of 8 affiliate school districts.

Tri-County provides workforce education to some of the poorest school districts in Ohio and the rate of poverty of our students is typically over 50%. Despite this fact, we have maintained a strong representation as a leader of workforce education for high school and adult students in the region.

Some Positives:

- Our students have dreams to achieve success in the development of a career endeavor, unlike that of students that do not choose to come to the career center.
- Students come to our doorstep in order to achieve more than a basic high school education.
- They have seen the positive nature of developing a skill, trade or craft to sustain their goals of obtaining a living wage job; instead of the stark reality of excessive debt that may result from attending a university.

- For the most part, our school reaches average students in our affiliate districts. Students who know and understand the meaning of hard work to obtain success.
- We maintain a broad base for workforce initiatives and have meetings with over 20 advisory committees that meet semi-annually, some more often, enabling our instructors to stay connected and current with trends and job openings in the region.
- Apprenticeship opportunities and networking with labor unions and businesses are an important part of what we do to place our students in jobs that meet individual needs and that of the State of Ohio.

Concerns:

- While career centers have a rich history in providing workforce education, the road to this point has been met with resistance by the bureaucracy within the Department of Education.
- We need to understand that preparation for a college education is NOT the goal of every student. Yet the establishment does not allow enough latitude for students achieve a high school diploma without a multitude of assessments.
- Students that attend career centers are more highly tested than any other group of students.
- The EMIS system is broken, and little has been resolved in order to fix this system despite the concerns of our organization and the work many others.
- We, meaning career centers, work with all students despite their abilities. We are cognizant of those who attend our centers to obtain a career, or those who have aspirations of

doing more and wish to be propelled into a post-secondary environment.

- CTPD Lead Schools need to have more leadership authority in their regions to craft “programs” and not just “classes,” that fulfill the needs of potential employers, and do not just provide a one-time course that provides little value in career or technical education.

The time is right to do what is best for workforce education in Ohio. Working together to reform several silos into a Department of Learning and Achievement will better serve all entities and provide a positive track for students to achieve greater success.

An analogy that I use with our staff is the TEAM approach. Together Everyone Achieves More. To this end, we have a unique opportunity to serve more students in many ways while providing leadership from our Career Technical Planning District Lead Schools to make a greater impact on helping Ohio create a stronger workforce.

I commend the sponsors of HB 512 and encourage passage of the amendment and development of the Department of Learning and Achievement.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.