

**Testimony to the Ohio House of Representatives**  
**House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee**  
Rep. Louis W. Blessing III – Chair / Rep. Bill Reineke, Vice-Chair

**March 7, 2018**

**Ronald W. Matter, Superintendent - Penta Career Center**

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Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of this Committee - I am Ron Matter, Superintendent of Penta Career Center, and I am here as an individual to offer proponent testimony for HB 512.

“Considering this nationwide shortage of trained manpower, it stands to reason that the parts of our country which do the best job of educating and training young people are going to have the most success in attracting new industry. The Penta County Joint Vocational School – which some of you here helped to dedicate yesterday – was one of the deciding factors in our decision to locate our new machining plant in the Toledo area. I can tell you from experience that it is a lot easier to find bricks and mortar today than it is to find the people to man the machines in a complex industrial plant. Wherever an expanding company can find the people it needs, it will bring the bricks, mortar, and machines.” --- this quote is from a speech by Alan G. Loofbourrow, Group Vice-President, Power Train, Chrysler Corporation, at an economic development conference composed of approximately 500 industrialists and educators in Toledo, Ohio, on May 16, 1966, and personally introduced by then Ohio Governor James A. Rhodes.

Now, fast forward to today and listen to these remarks from Mark Lautman, author of “When Boomers Bail: A Community Economic Survival Guide”, “A structural shortage of qualified workers is creating a zero-sum labor market that is forcing communities to steal talent from each other in order to survive and grow....

Any community unable to attract and hold talent will join a growing number of economically doomed places where economic development is impossible.”

My point in sharing these two quotes is that here we are in 2018 still wrestling with these same workforce issues, multiplied now by 50 states, and the growing global economy in which we compete. In Ohio, this is compounded by mounting student loan debt and rising tuition for post-secondary education and the continuing wrong-minded perception that a four-year degree is the only viable path to career success. As a State, we need to be all about having multiple, high-quality paths for our students to be prepared for the workforce needs of today and into the future. This must include, as equal leaders, the Career Technical Planning Districts made up of Career Centers, Compacts, and Comprehensive School Districts. I believe that as a State we need to value ALL work, and ALL paths that move prepared students and adults into our workforce. The model to improve workforce training efforts currently being pushed by ODE is to grow CTE in Ohio, but Career Centers have not been the keystone in this ODE model and with no valid explanation as to why.

A report by The US Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by 2020, 80 % of all jobs will require some sort of training beyond a high school diploma. I believe that high quality Career Technical Education (CTE) like what we provide at the 49 Career Centers and the other Career Technical Planning Districts is more important than ever for Ohio to meet that workforce challenge.

Career Centers are proud to say that “high quality career tech equals jobs” for Ohio. We are not the right place for all students, but there are a lot more who should take advantage of what we have to offer. Career Centers are responsive to the needs of business and industry partners, who help design our classes and serve as advisors to our instructors. Career Centers are constantly evaluating what we do in order to meet the needs of our students and our business communities.

It is reported that Albert Einstein once said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” While I do have concerns with concentrating this much power into the Office of the Governor, I also recognize that Ohio cannot continue to do business as usual when it comes to workforce training. The talk of better coordination of efforts between the bureaucracies at ODE, ODHE, and OWT is just that, all talk. To truly make this proposed new model successful, there must be real leadership, a commitment to meaningful change at the top, and inclusion of those stakeholders at the ground level in making this proposed merger a success.

“We must find jobs and employment for our young people who are entering the labor market..... this is a duty for every elected Democrat and every elected Republican. We must create a climate for business and industry to remain here and to come here. This is our finest hour in higher and secondary education in our state..... Technical and Vocational education must reach everybody in the state and Penta County is blazing the trail to reach this goal.” These remarks were offered by then Gov. James A. Rhodes, on May 15, 1966 at the dedication ceremony for Penta County Joint Vocational School District – upon completion of the first year of operation of Penta JVSD and Penta Technical College, which is now Owens Community College.

At that time the State demonstrated a commitment to CTE as a means of solving the workforce problem. Somewhere along that path, we / Ohio lost our way, and this legislation provides the opportunity to get back to that commitment and rethink what learning and achievement needs to be about, and more importantly about growing a trained and skilled workforce which needs to be at the top of that list.

I want to take the opportunity to thank Representative Reineke for this bold piece of legislation. Our work with Representative Reineke on the proposed

amendment to his bill which would include Career Technical Planning Districts into a leadership position in the Department of Learning and Achievement, convinces me that there truly is a sense of urgency to create a better system for ALL of Ohio to compete, and not just to continue the one size fits all solution that has gotten Ohio to where we are today.

I look forward to working with this committee to provide any additional information you believe may be helpful, and I invite you to visit any of the career-technical programs and especially Career Centers in your house districts to see first-hand the value we bring to education and workforce training in Ohio.

I am glad to take any questions you might have.

*Thank you.*