



Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association

37 West Broad Street, Suite 1120 ♦ Columbus, Ohio 43215

Joel Potts, Executive Director

**Ohio House Higher Education and Workforce Committee
House Bill 166 and Substitute Senate Bill 3 Testimony
Joel Potts, Executive Director
Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association
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Chairman Duffey, Vice-Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Ohio House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 166 and Substitute Senate Bill 3.

My name is Joel Potts and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association. We represent Ohio's 88 county departments of job and family services. Sixty-seven of Ohio's county departments of job and family services also serve as the county's Ohio Means Jobs center, or workforce development agency (formerly known as "one-stops"), and all counties conduct employment and training programs for individuals on public assistance.

Serving as a connecting point and convener between job seekers, employers and the education community is one of the most important responsibilities of the Ohio Means Jobs workforce system and JFS system. House Bill 166 and Substitute Senate Bill 3 take important steps to solidify efforts to modernize the system and coordinate efforts across various systems.

By conforming state statute with the new federal workforce program, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which was passed by Congress with broad bipartisan support in 2014, these companion bills take an important step in solidifying the various program changes that have been made on the state and local level in response to its passage. From providing for regional planning while maintaining local control, to providing flexibility within the public workforce system for important employer services such as incumbent worker training, WIOA has allowed the public workforce system to respond to the needs of today's economy.

Ohio's OhioMeansJobs centers are in an excellent position to assist with the implementation of provisions in these bills designed to help students graduate prepared to either enter the workforce successfully, or understand promising career pathways and the options available to them to complete further education and training based on industry-led curriculums that are likely to result in an in-demand job. Provisions included in these bills such as the OhioMeansJobs-Ready Readiness Seal and In-Demand Jobs Week are designed to do just that.

The OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Seal is designed to meet the universal demand for individuals with what are commonly referred to as “soft skills” – including punctuality, reliability, and the ability to work as part of a team – to help encourage the development of these skills in secondary school students and also to help make the demonstration of such skills easily identifiable for employers. Many OMJ centers are actively partnering with their local schools on endeavors to teach these skills, and often times the development of soft skills is a priority for individuals who are receiving work-required public assistance benefits through their county JFS.

In addition, the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program, administered locally by the CDJFS/OMJ center, accepts volunteers ages 16-24 who are looking to remove barriers and develop the necessary skills and training to enter the workforce. Often times, plans are designed again to help with the development of such skills. Beginning this summer, youth enrolled in secondary school from ages 14 and up may be engaged with a program designed to meet the needs of youth who are in school, want to stay in school, and are looking to develop connections to employment throughout the school year and engage in summer employment activities.

County JFS departments and OMJ centers also look forward to partnering with the Office of Workforce Transformation on activities around “In-Demand Jobs Week”. Counties place a high value on connecting students and job seekers to potential employers by facilitating tours of area employers for school-aged children in conjunction with local schools, and also by regularly holding job fairs to give area job seekers the opportunity to engage directly with local companies.

Holding “In-Demand Jobs Week” activities throughout the state at the same time will elevate attention to Ohio’s workforce system, highlight job and career opportunities for residents and serve as a catalyst for employers, education centers, and public and private workforce developers to work together to strengthen the State’s workforce system.

Thank you for the opportunity to support the provisions of HB 166 and SB 3 we believe will strengthen Ohio’s workforce by operationalizing and helping to replicate successful efforts to better connect industry, education and training institutions, and job seekers. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.