



Written Proponent Testimony on SB 3 and HB 166
House Higher Education & Workforce Development Committee
June 21, 2018

Chairman Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, on behalf of Ohio's public community colleges, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of companion bills Senate Bill 3 (Sens. Beagle and Balderson) and House Bill 166 (Reps. Reineke and Cupp). The Ohio Association of Community Colleges represents the presidents and trustees of all twenty-three community colleges across Ohio. Our community colleges are on the front line of meeting the workforce needs of our regional and local employers by providing the training and technical education to help Ohio meet the demands of a 21st Century economy.

Middle-skills jobs, which generally require education and training beyond a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree, are the largest share of the current labor market, yet we hear daily from key industries that they are unable to find trained workers to meet their needs. We have all seen and heard the staggering statistics on the number of unfilled job openings in Ohio. According to the National Skills Coalition, middle-skill jobs account for 55% of Ohio's labor market, yet only 47% of the state's workers are trained to the middle skill-level. To make matters worse, the graying demographics of Ohio's working population will only make this skills gap even wider when considering increased retirement rates and Ohio's slower than the national average growth. The "Graying Tsunami" in Ohio's workforce will bring retirements at a staggering rate with limited trained workers to replace these employees.

All of this means that there is an incredible need for Ohio to develop a skilled and productive workforce by connecting business and industry with qualified workers, promoting career pathways to students and working adults and aligning education, apprenticeship and training programs with in-demand occupations. There needs to be a greater urgency for government agencies at all levels to work together with our educational providers to better identify and provide career information as early as possible.

SB 3 and HB 166 is a common sense step to reforming Ohio's workforce training system while bringing greater awareness and opportunities to help connect students with in-demand careers. OACC strongly supports the proposed "In-Demand Jobs Week." One of the great barriers to pursuing certain careers is that students, and far too often their parents, are either not aware or are insufficiently informed of many of the opportunities that exist. Connecting students with local and regional employers will increase awareness and student exposure to in-demand skills and occupations, many of which are heavily focused on STEM related professions. An "In-Demand Jobs Week" will expose students to exciting opportunities at a time that could allow them to schedule courses or pursue technical pathways or apprenticeship programs that may be better aligned to their potential career of interest.

OACC also supports the other provisions contained in both bills that we believe will serve as a catalyst to encouraging more students to pursue many of these career pathways. Pre-apprenticeship training programs in high schools help prepare students for a registered apprenticeship program while also help to students accelerate through a four or five year apprenticeship program. Finally, providing credit for work-based learning experiences and allowing a student to earn an OhioMeansJobs Readiness

Designation are valuable tools to allow students to gain valuable work experience, learn critical “soft skills” and develop other job-readiness skills that will help them successfully transition to their next step – whether it be to enter directly into a job, apprenticeship program or pursuing a postsecondary certificate or degree.

Chairman Duffey and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, thank you in advance for your consideration of these bills. The provisions included in both SB 3 and HB 166 will improve alignment and collaboration to provide greater access to a skilled workforce for Ohio’s business and industry while expanding educational and career opportunities for our students.