



Representative Bill Reineke & Representative Robert Cupp

Sponsor Testimony Sub. HB 166

March 7, 2018

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Chairman Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney,

And members of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee.

Representative Cupp and myself wish to thank you for hearing Substitute HB 166. This substitute bill contains new language, but still addresses the overriding purpose of enhancing workforce development.

First and foremost, substitute HB 166 will create a uniform definition of "Ohio Technical Center" under the Ohio Revised Code.

Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs) provide labor market-driven, post-secondary workforce education and training to adults in career-technical planning districts throughout the state. They are the “adult education” component of a career center. OTCs typically operate on nights and weekends with the same equipment and staff utilized at the career center. As our OTC directors and career center superintendents will explain today, OTCs are highly responsive and flexible in meeting the needs of employers to provide customized business services and train their incumbent workers. Note that:

- a. OTC’s are currently governed by ODHE and recognized by the Chancellor. We understand that ODHE must approve OTC programs. ODHE is aware of this proposal and remains neutral on it.
- b. OTCs are fully accredited by the Council on Occupational Education or the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges.
- c. OTCs must meet standards and criteria adopted by the US Department of Education.
- d. However, OTCs are not recognized as “institutions of higher education” under Ohio law.

We did months of research with LSC prior to crafting this language, and have research memoranda we can share with the committee. It appears there are dozens of different definitions of “institution of higher education” under the revised code, which could affect different aspects of state policy. This bill would only define OTCs as “institutions of higher education” for purposes of certain state program and grant opportunities, which, as they will explain today, our OTCs feel they would qualify for. It will allow them to directly apply and be a “lead applicant” for programs such as the RAPIDS grant, which seeks to support post-secondary institutions and their workforce development initiatives. LSC and other legal counsel have explained that this would not affect accreditation requirements for OTCs, or any other aspects of educational policy.

Defining OTCs and allowing them to be institutions of higher education under certain circumstances is also symbolic as it confirms that OTCs are an institution of the state and governed by ODHE. The simple definition may also allow OTCs to be considered and “brought to the table” for purposes of future post-secondary grants and other workforce initiatives.

The overall lack of clarity and recognition of OTCs was the genesis of this proposal. The OTC directors you will hear from today feel like they are “on their own island” — and although they provide substantial career opportunities for adults across the state and are integral to the state’s workforce development efforts, they never seem to be recognized or included as part of workforce development initiatives/solutions.

Finally, while we are amending the bill with brand new language, the legislation still maintains its overriding purpose of addressing Workforce Development. And although this bill has already technically received several hearings, we fully anticipate additional hearings in light of the change we made here.

Thank you.