



**BEFORE THE  
ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
OF THE OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**REP. PAUL ZELTWANGER, CHAIRMAN**

**HOUSE BILL 2 TESTIMONY  
OF  
THE MAHONING VALLEY MANUFACTURERS COALITION**

**BY  
JESSICA BORZA**

**MAY 22, 2019**

Good morning. My name is Jessica Borza, and I am the Executive Director of the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition. I am here to voice our strong support for House Bill 2.

I've served as the Executive Director of MVMC since its inception in 2011. Together with Sue Watson, we serve as the convener for MVMC, a sector partnership focused on solving manufacturing workforce challenges. Our sector partnership includes manufacturers and partners working together around a common set of priorities. Our partners include Career and Technical Centers, Educational Service Centers, ASPIRE programs, Ohio Technical Centers, our local community college and universities, Workforce Development Boards, community-based organizations, economic development, and other community leaders.

These organizations recognize our industry sector partnership as a smarter way to work, and we know we're stronger together. MVMC is just one of a growing number of manufacturing industry-led partnerships across the state. There are now more than a dozen partnerships in various stages of formation with others coming online. This is occurring because – not only do we communicate within our own partnership – but we communicate and share across partnerships to generate solutions and best practices.

On behalf of our nearly 100 members, I'd like to share my perspective on the value of sector partnerships and provide you with a sense of what it takes to coordinate these partnerships and why the funding included in House Bill 2 will be extraordinarily helpful to our local efforts.

Let me first thank Lt. Governor Husted for his belief in both sector partnerships and industry credentials. We appreciate that he has embraced the sector partnership model.

I live and breathe sector partnerships every day and have experienced first-hand the power of the approach.

Here's what we've learned through our experience:

- Industry is stronger when a neutral convener facilitates peer learning through best practice sharing, benchmarking, and collaborative problem solving.
- A systemic approach to identifying the collective manufacturing workforce demand brings greater focus, creates efficiencies, and increases effectiveness.
- Manufacturers are more likely to engage in systemic sector partnership solutions than attempting to navigate disparate programs and services.
- Educators and workforce partners benefit from having the manufacturers speak with one voice (rather than trying to create many one-off programs for separate constituents) to give more meaningful feedback about common needs.

So, I can tell you how effective they are and how much we appreciate support for industry sector partnerships included in the legislation.

But, you don't have to take my word for it.

Sector partnerships are widely recognized as a proven strategy for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and employers, and Ohio is behind other states across the nation in state-level policy that actively fosters the development and implementation of sector partnerships.

In a recent state-by-state scan completed by the National Skills Coalition, 29 states had adopted state policies in support of sector partnerships—including direct funding, technical assistance, and program funding. They have provided this support in recognition that sector partnerships create the infrastructure necessary to implement workforce, education, and economic development strategies.

Sector partnerships become the operating system to pull the right partners together, get on the same page, and roll up their sleeves to get the work done. MVMC and my peers in our network of sector partnerships across the state stand ready to mobilize around a set of common priorities.

House Bill 2 also would create the TechCred Program and the Individual Micro-Credential Assistance Program, providing support for training leading to micro-credentials.

Sector partnerships can be instrumental in supporting the implementation of these programs by helping to get the word out to manufacturers and partners and creating the systems and processes necessary to train individuals and employees more efficiently than individuals or companies could alone. With the additional funding provided for in this bill, our sector partnerships can be a vital contributor to the goal of 10,000 micro-credentials over the next two years.

Here's why I say that.

In the Mahoning Valley, we have increased the number of credentials attained by students in high school and post-secondary programs as well as existing workers on a path to advancement.

Before the MVMC existed, our local training programs did not incorporate industry credentials. Nor did our manufacturers recognize their value.

Now, credentials are embedded in manufacturing training programs within all four of our career and technical centers at both the high school and adult levels as well as the community college. We even used credentials to create competency-based apprenticeship programs through the MVMC.

For us, credentials have become an important tool to translate the common needs of industry to our education partners. Now, our manufacturers understand what it means when a student comes to them with a certain credential. They also understand that they can fast-track those students into more advanced positions by enabling them to “test out” of certain portions and continue their learning through our MVMC apprenticeship program.

Having a sector partnership in place in the Mahoning Valley has enabled us to create a system of education and training providers and programs to produce a larger number of credentials and increase the adoption of credentials by manufacturers. Sector partnerships across Ohio will increase credential attainment more than a micro-credentialing grant program would alone. They will create the capacity and implement the strategies necessary to increase the number of individuals pursuing and attaining credentials. By aggregating industry needs, sector partnerships will also be able to communicate demand for the credentials, creating a “pull” and value for attaining them.

As the convener for MVMC, my job is to understand the need, research the best practices, understand the landscape of what exists, secure resources to fill gaps, then mobilize the right partners to solve the problem.

I thought it might be helpful if I spend the remainder of my time providing a few other examples of what that means on a day-to-day basis. So, here are a few.

We often serve as matchmakers.

This can be as simple as responding to a high school teacher’s request for mock interviews and lining up local manufacturers to speak with her students.

Or, it can be more involved like working with our career centers to create a pre-apprenticeship program, then facilitating the process of getting local companies who have apprenticeship programs to commit, distributing student resumes, and working with the school to monitor the students over the summer.

In another example, a guidance counselor called last week and had three seniors in a panic because it just set in that they don’t have a plan after high school. We were able to arrange for the community college to go out and meet with them at the school, and we also were able to hook them up with a local manufacturer who had called us wanting to brainstorm about different avenues for finding summer workers.

On a larger scale, we’ve been working with one of our member companies that is expanding. They needed to hire 100 machinists. We knew the supply of machinists in our area wasn’t meeting demand before the expansion, so we had to be creative. We worked with the company to identify the skills necessary for entry level and next-step positions as well as the correlating industry credentials to validate their skills. We worked with our ASPIRE program community college to set up an accelerated training program that would include brush-up math remediate, workplace skills, and technical skills necessary for entry into the job. We then partnered with our local Goodwill and community action agency to help us to spread the word and screen candidates. More than 50 individuals applied for 12 slots. Training will begin in a couple of weeks. When they complete, the company will hire them and continue to train them on the job supported by Workforce Investment funding from our local workforce board.

So, the company now has a pipeline for talent they wouldn't have had otherwise. We've leveraged a number of existing resources through our partners. We're looking to scale the program to other companies throughout the community. And, on a personal level, we are making a difference in people's lives. During an interview last week with one of the applicants, she shared with me that her sister was hired out of the first program. She talked about how amazing it was that she was able to learn the job in such a short training program and how she came home from work the first day bragging about how she had a dental card for the first time in her life. When her sister had applied, she was working for minimum wage at a call center. Now, she is making more than double the hourly wage she was earning at the call center with full health benefits, three weeks' vacation, a pension, and 401k matching program.

With state support, and in partnership with the DeWine administration, the sector partnership network will bolster the economic competitiveness of Ohio and connect more Ohioans like her with the skills needed to succeed in manufacturing career pathways.

Thank you.