



Testimony before the Ohio Economic & Workforce Development Committee
Substitute House Bill 4
Wednesday, June 5th, 2019

Good morning Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki and members of the House Economic & Workforce Development. I am Tom Walsh, Vice President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the presidents and trustees of all twenty-three of the state's public community colleges. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of substitute House Bill 4, sponsored by Representatives Richardson and Robinson. OACC applauds Speaker Householder, Minority Leader Sykes, the DeWine-Husted Administration and the bill sponsors for sending a strong, bipartisan message on the urgency to better streamline our job training programs to better respond to the needs of business and industry.

One of the single most critical issue facing Ohio's business community is the lack of skilled talent to fill open positions. Recently, the President of Strada Education Network summed up our nation's workforce problem by saying:

"There are three national workforce problems that we are trying to solve:

1. 44 million adults with some education but no degree;
2. 7 million unfilled jobs; and,
3. Low-completion rates among low-income students."

-Bill Hansen, President, Strada Education Network

Aligning the workforce with the competencies and skills needed to meet the needs of employers is hard and challenging; but at the same time, immensely rewarding work. The challenges Bill Hansen mentioned are real, and the reality is they exist because there is no simple solution to those three problems.

Due to advances in technology and automation, Ohio's economy and the skills necessary are changing at an unprecedented pace. Technological innovations are having a profound impact on today's economy. They will also continue to impact the future of our workforce, our jobs, and the skills needed for those jobs. Further, the velocity of this change will be unmatched compared to historical standards.

To keep up with the needs of business in a 21st century workplace, we must strengthen our efforts to prepare and continuously retrain Ohioans for the technology-intensive jobs of tomorrow. If Ohio is going to compete in the new economy and meet the Complete to Compete goal of having 65% of adults with a postsecondary credential, it is imperative for the state and all postsecondary training providers to better align the training, skills and competencies of our programs with the needs of employers.

Ohio's community colleges are playing an important role in filling the workforce needs throughout our state. Our colleges have increased the number of credentials awarded by 8.5%, during a time when our overall enrollment has declined due to the good economy. Additionally, Ohio's community colleges are focusing heavily on job-focused training certificates and industry-recognized credentials to respond to the increasing number of employers concerned with applied competencies to help upskill both their prospective or incumbent workers.



What has become clear is that employers are quickly embracing value of the workforce ready credentials to meet their current and future workforce needs. Aligning workforce training to the needs of business is a key strategy our institutions are embracing to ensure workers have the skills necessary to secure gainful employment and businesses have access to qualified candidates. For our industry partners, these job training programs are an efficient, targeted and cost-efficient way to help build a skilled and productive workforce.

House Bill 4 provides the business community a stronger voice to ensure Ohioans to ensure Ohio's high schools, colleges and universities are preparing individuals with the education and training necessary to fill the jobs of today as well as tomorrow. OACC believes that the bill supports Office of Workforce Transformation's mission to better connect businesses with state efforts and education providers to build a dynamically skilled and productive workforce. HB 4 will streamline the job training pipeline and provide improved coordination for high school and postsecondary workforce training programs and certificates that will lead to a more skilled, productive and dynamic workforce.

Ohio is at a crossroads in how we are linking postsecondary education and job training with the labor market needs to help move Ohioans into rewarding and self-sustaining careers. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4 and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.