



## TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 258

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Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee

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Haley Holik  
Visiting Fellow  
Opportunity Solutions Project

House Economic and Workforce Development Committee  
6/10/2020  
Haley Holik, Visiting Fellow  
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chair Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 258. My name is Haley Holik, and I am a Visiting Fellow at Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP). OSP is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that develops state and federal policy solutions to advance the power of work so that more people may achieve the American Dream. HB 258 will do just that by creating new, debt-free career paths by allowing workers to earn licensure through government-approved apprenticeship programs. Under the apprenticeship model, workers are primarily learning on the job to earn their occupational license, and they are getting paid to do it.

The economic fallout of COVID-19 has been devastating for working families, and Americans are rethinking the four-year college track and student debt that comes with it.<sup>i</sup> But learning a trade to earn a living has its own set of barriers. Occupational licensing isn't exclusive to high-paying jobs, and this is why Ohio needs HB 258. The average salary of a veterinary tech<sup>ii</sup> in Ohio is \$34,660 a year.<sup>iii</sup> A pharmacy tech<sup>iv</sup> in Ohio earns an average of \$31,360 annually.<sup>v</sup> These occupations are licensed, and the upfront investment to earn a license can keep people locked out of these jobs and prevent them earning a paycheck. Government shouldn't get in the way of an honest living.

Over a quarter of full-time professionals in the U.S. require an occupational license or certification to work in their career.<sup>vi</sup> Among lower-income occupations in Ohio, it takes an average of 350 days of training and experience, an exam, and \$188 in fees to earn a license.<sup>vii</sup> This can be a costly upfront investment, especially for those lower on the economic ladder<sup>viii</sup> who have been hit hardest by COVID-19.

HB 258 would create an alternative path for people to earn the license they need to work—all while taking home a paycheck. This bill offers a practical solution to get people back to work in three simple steps. First, a worker must complete an apprenticeship program that meets the standards of the U.S. Department of Labor. Second, they must pass any requisite exams in order to be licensed in the occupation. Third, they must pay any requisite fees and submit to the same background checks as any other applicant.

These government-approved apprenticeships are employer-driven and must include structured on-the-job training, mentorship, and pay. This is why lawmakers in North Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, and Alabama have already expanded apprenticeships in their states, and Ohio should follow suit. Ohio could be a real leader in this part of the country to help get people back to work. Now more than ever, working families need the government to remove needless barriers to economic opportunity. Ohio should advance HB 258 to give workers the opportunity to take home a paycheck while earning a license in their chosen career.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>i</sup> SimpsonScarborough, *Higher Ed and COVID-19 National Student Survey* (2020), <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4254080/SimpsonScarborough%20National%20Student%20Survey%20.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ohio Revised Code 4741.19(C).

<sup>iii</sup> This information comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, available here: [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_oh.htm#29-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_oh.htm#29-0000).

<sup>iv</sup> Ohio Revised Code 4729:3.

<sup>v</sup> This information comes from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, available here: [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_oh.htm#29-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_oh.htm#29-0000).

<sup>vi</sup> Foundation for Government Accountability, *How states can grow their skilled workforce through universal licensing recognition* (2020), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Licensing-Reciprocity-and-Recognition.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> Institute for Justice, *License to Work: A National Study of burdens from Occupational Licensing* (2017), <https://ij.org/report/license-work-2/ltw-state-profiles/ltw2-ohio/>.

<sup>viii</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *The State of Occupational Licensing: Research, State Policies and Trends* (2017), [https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/employ/Licensing/State\\_Occupational\\_Licensing.pdf](https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/employ/Licensing/State_Occupational_Licensing.pdf).