

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 98

March 28, 2017

Presenter: Walt Davis

Address: 5446 Hamilton Rd
Lebanon, OH 45036

Contact: wrad@zoomtown.com, 513-479-9119

Business: Retired and Farming

Chairman Brenner and members of the Committee, good afternoon. I am Walt Davis from Lebanon, OH, here to testify in support of HB 98. I am a retired businessman and educator, having worked in a wide variety of military, business and educational careers.

As I understand the purpose of HB 98, it is to ensure that public schools in Ohio provide career counseling and career orientation activities to all students over a wider range of career types; specifically adding 'skilled trades' to the list of career types. Frankly, I am surprised to find that this legislation is necessary, but some brief research has convinced me that it should be enacted.

After serving 11 years as an Air Force Officer, and many years in several businesses, both in the United States and overseas, I then worked for five years leading a program at a joint vocational school. Lastly, I served for five years as a department chair at a large community

college. I have also served on the Education and Workforce Development Committee of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce for about 20 years. I was also elected to a four-year term as a member of the Lebanon City School District School Board.

Throughout my careers in the military, business and education, I have seen the enormous value of skilled training, and the shortage of it that we seem to suffer in this country. Those skills permeate all areas of work, from military mechanics, trained nurses, and construction trades to law enforcement, and even airline pilots. Assuming that some public school systems avoid exposing their students to such opportunities, probably to boost their college enrollment numbers, those schools are doing a serious disservice to the world of commerce that sustains our nation. Make no mistake, commerce needs and uses far more skilled workers than it does college graduates. And, unbelievably, such school systems are also cheating their students out of learning about highly productive career choices that they might be best suited for.

Let me give you two, first-hand examples of the tremendous rewards awaiting school systems that expose their students to ALL types of career information, one at the high school level, and one at the community college.

Recently, I helped raise nearly \$1/2 million to build an observatory in Warren County. The observatory was completed on time with funds to spare. It was an unusual design done by a professional architect to exacting technical standards – equivalent to commercial standards. The observatory was erected by students from our vocational school,

the Warren County Career Center. About 50 students from the Carpentry, Electrical and Heavy Equipment programs completed the work as a class project, even arriving and leaving the site in a school bus. Photos are at Appendix A. Every one of these students had job offers from local contractors to start on the day after graduation. That sky-high record of job placement is typical of these trade programs at this school.

Upon my arrival as Chair of the Aviation Department at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, I hosted a job needs conference at the Dayton Airport. I was amazed to see a large hotel conference room filled with CEO's, COO's, CFO's, HR Directors and other top executives of major airlines in the region. They described critical needs for skilled employees to fill jobs such as: pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, flight dispatchers, ticket and gate agents, security personnel, and even accountants & office clerks.

As a department chair, I experienced many weeks with more airline managers in my office than students or parents. At times, we even created programs nearly overnight to fill special skill requirements for these companies. I can't recall any of them ever stating that a college degree was a requirement. They wanted skilled employees, regardless of their academic credentials. Of course we included all training for the professional licensing and certifications needed by the FAA. The last time I discussed placement with the department chair who replaced me, he said that he had a standing order from a major airline for 100% of his pilot, flight attendant and flight dispatch students. Aircraft mechanics have historically been in extremely high demand. See photo at Appendix B.

These are just examples that I experienced first-hand. At Sinclair, I shared an office complex with four other department chairs. They all complained that placement was not their problem, student recruitment was their biggest challenge.

To think that career opportunities such as these might be closed off from our eager young students is unconscionable. We need to put HB 98 into law to ensure that does not happen.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 98. I am happy to answer any questions.