



**Ohio House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee  
Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 166 - Proponent Testimony  
Ryan D. Burgess, Director, Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation  
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Good morning, Chairman Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee. My name is Ryan Burgess, Director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of both Senate Bill 3, which the Senate passed unanimously, and its companion bill, House Bill 166.

Governor Kasich created the Office of Workforce Transformation with the recognition that the state's workforce system has historically been siloed and fragmented. It is our role to coordinate the efforts of the thirteen state agencies and nearly one hundred programs that touch workforce in Ohio.

To ensure the needs of businesses and job-seekers alike are being met, we work with the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, which consists of 24 business, non-profit, labor, and education leaders, along with Representatives Reineke and Barnes and Senators Beagle and Williams. Our mission is to grow Ohio's economy by developing a skilled and productive workforce, promoting effective training programs, and connecting Ohio employers with qualified workers.

You have likely heard Governor Kasich talk about autonomous vehicles, predictive analytics, and drone technology. All of these innovations will have a profound and positive impact on Ohio. They will also impact the future of our workforce, our jobs, and the skills needed for those jobs. To keep up with the needs of business in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, Ohio must strengthen its efforts to prepare and continuously retrain Ohioans for the technology-intensive jobs of tomorrow. I want to take a couple of minutes to highlight and discuss a few of the proposals in Senate Bill 3 that also appear in House Bill 166:

## **Credit for Work-Based Learning Experiences**

The best way students can learn about work, *is to work*. In other words, this is how they can learn those valuable “soft skills” that employers are looking for in employees. Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 166 expand current Credit Flexibility law by giving all students an opportunity to receive credit for work experience and by building a consistent framework that helps schools provide academic credit for workplace experience. Many counties and schools in Ohio are already leading the way in providing students the opportunity to gain real-world experience, like Akron Public Schools’ and its recent designation as a Ford Next Generation Learning Community, The PAST Foundation in Columbus, and Federal Hocking Schools, to name a few. We believe all students deserve similar opportunities to better understand career pathways and develop the soft skills employers seek.

## **Ohio’s In-Demand Jobs Week**

A great way to increase awareness of Ohio’s In-Demand careers and pathways is to create a statewide “In-Demand Jobs Week”. Starting in 2018, In-Demand Jobs Week will take place annually during the first workweek in May. The Governor’s Office of Workforce Transformation will engage agency partners, industry groups, and stakeholders across the state in an “all-hands-on-deck” effort to promote Ohio’s In-Demand Jobs through open houses, career awareness activities and events statewide. In-Demand Jobs Week will connect middle and high school students with local employers and increase student exposure to in-demand skills and occupations as they prepare to enter the workforce. Ohio’s In-Demand Jobs Week has great potential to create a lasting impact for Ohio’s students, businesses, and local communities.

## **OhioMeansJobs-Readiness Designation**

Months ago, during a local school visit, a high school superintendent told me about all of the college coaches who visited his high school to recruit athletes. After recruitment, high schools hold elaborate national signing days to recognize the student athletes. However, he said, we never have national signing days for students who are ready to work. The proposed OhioMeansJobs-readiness designation is student-driven and will provide well-deserved recognition to students who demonstrate the soft skills and job-readiness characteristics businesses seek. Students will earn the OhioMeansJobs-readiness designation by successfully exhibiting work ethic competencies (such as teamwork, problem-solving, reliability, punctuality, etc.) validated by three or more of the student’s teachers and/or mentors.

## **Simultaneous Credit**

Simultaneous credit allows public and private high school students to earn high school credit in multiple subjects through cross-disciplinary curriculum integration. For example, a student taking an engineering class could also receive math credit if the math content in the engineering course she is taking meets academic standards. Integrated instruction breaks down barriers between academic subjects and career-related coursework and enables students to master content in a way that suits their individual learning styles. It will also give students more time to take college courses, earn industry credentials, and participate in apprenticeships and other on-the-job learning experiences, which will help build a stronger future workforce. The Office of Workforce Transformation will collaborate with the Departments of Education and Higher Education to promote simultaneous credit and provide schools with guidance on implementation.

## **Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) Reform**

With approximately 23,000 ex-offenders leaving our prison system every year, Certificates of Qualification for Employment empower individuals to re-enter the workforce. Common Pleas judges issue CQEs, which lift the collateral sanctions that keep individuals with previous felony or misdemeanor convictions from consideration for employment in a particular field. A current barrier in the Ohio Revised Code for ex-offenders is the required wait time – six months for a misdemeanor and one year for a felony – before they can apply for a CQE. Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 166 would change current law by granting the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections with rule-making authority to establish criteria to permit certain offenders who complete rehabilitative programs, such as reintegration units and vocational programs, and have maintained a low security status, to apply for CQEs immediately upon release from prison. Furthermore, CQEs provide legal protections to employers who wish to hire ex-offenders. The value is clear: this provision will help ex-offenders better and more quickly reintegrate into the workforce, while ensuring employer needs are met.

## **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – Conformity**

In 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 166 update state law to conform with the new federal law. Key stakeholders, including the County Commissioners' Association of Ohio, the Ohio Workforce Association and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services Directors' Association, have engaged in months of discussion to develop agreed upon language to bring the State of Ohio into conformity with the new standards of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

## **STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics**

Senate Bill 3 and House Bill 166 create a STEAM designation for new or existing STEM schools that want to integrate art and design into the STEM curriculum. By expanding the grades served, students in younger grades will be provided an opportunity to benefit from a STEM or STEAM specialized curriculum. The study of art and design can deepen STEM learning by encouraging critical analysis, problem solving, adaptive thinking and creativity. These skills are essential to success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. The Department of Education’s existing STEM committee will evaluate proposals for the new STEAM designation.

Senate Bill 3 and its companion House Bill 166 will better unite local business and education stakeholders to develop proactive and in-demand education and training programs to prepare young Ohioans for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have no doubt that this committee shares our objective of increasing collaboration within our communities to ensure bright futures for Ohioans of all ages. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with you to move these initiatives forward and welcome any questions you have at this time.