

Columbus Office

77 S. High St.  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor – H. District 67  
Columbus, OH 43215  
(614) 644-6711  
Rep67@ohiohouse.gov



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**REP. ANDREW O. BRENNER**

June 7, 2017

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, thank you for hearing sponsor testimony for Substitute House Bill 124. Before I get into what this bill does, I would like to give a little background on how this bill came about.

In 2015, the Delaware Area Career Center (DACC) went to the voters asking for funding that would give the career center more than \$7 million a year. This appropriation was to be used in conjunction with other funds to build a new campus and expand services. My friends and neighbors in Delaware County overwhelmingly supported this levy; passing it by almost ten thousand votes<sup>1</sup>. This was a huge win for the DACC and its superintendent Mary Beth Freeman whom you will hear from later. The issue, and the reason for this bill, arose when Superintendent Freeman and the DACC board went to collect the taxes appropriated by the levy and were denied.

The Delaware Area Career Center serves students not just in Delaware County, but also in the neighboring counties of Franklin, Union, Morrow, and Marion. Unbeknownst to those at the DACC, the Delaware County Board of Elections failed to notify the boards of elections in the neighboring counties that this levy needed to be on their ballots as well. 1,026 voters, therefore, were unable to vote on this levy and Tax Commissioner Joe Testa denied distribution of the funds because it would have been taxation without representation.

The Delaware County Board of Elections has taken full responsibility for their actions and is working with the Delaware Area Career Center to remedy the situation. As this issue has never happened in the state of Ohio, however, the solution has been elusive. The DACC asked the Ohio Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus which would compel Commissioner Testa to release the funding owed to the Delaware Area Career Center. The Supreme Court, in a 4-3 ruling, denied the

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<sup>1</sup> Del. Co. BOE election results 2015 Summary Report Official Results Page 6. <http://delawareboe.org/wp-content/themes/dcboe/files/results/2015/general.summary.pdf>

writ of mandamus and ruled against the DACC<sup>2</sup>. This brings us to our current state and to Substitute House Bill 124.

Substitute House Bill 124 authorizes the Delaware Area Career Center to submit the question of a renewal tax levy to the voters who did not have the chance to vote on the levy (those from Union, Marion, Morrow, and Franklin Counties) in 2015. Again, through no fault of their own, the DACC is unable to fund the programs and facilities that their students deserve because of an error by the board of elections. This bill moves the process for funding along by allowing the DACC board of education to adopt a resolution that enables the levy to be put on the ballot for a special or general election for in the areas that did not have an opportunity to vote on the election in 2015.

I would like to take a moment to commend the Legislative Service Commission, specifically Peter Cooper, McKenzie Damon, and Emily Wendel, on their drafting and redrafting of this bill as well as for their guidance. Substitute House Bill 124 was substituted in the House to fix a constitutionality issue that arose in the original draft of the bill and to add specificity for future ballot language. We also added an emergency clause to the bill. Substitute House Bill 124 is of an urgent matter as the old levy is due to expire at the end of the year. If a levy is not passed and certified by the tax commissioner before the end of this year, it would be catastrophic to our local career center. It is our intent to move this bill as quickly as we can to address a 100% shortfall of funds that will occur on January 1, 2018. The Delaware Area Career Center and all of its students are languishing in purgatory due to an offense they did not commit. Substitute House Bill 124 is their only hope.

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of this bill and for allowing Representative Rick Carfagna and I to testify on Substitute House Bill 124. We are more than happy to take questions following testimony. Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> The State Ex Rel. Delaware Joint Vocational School District Board of Education v. Testa, Tax Commr. <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/rod/docs/pdf/0/2017/2017-Ohio-796.pdf>