Ohio Senate Education Committee
SB 89 Proponent Testimony
(Post-Secondary Credit Provisions)

Testimony of Greg Edinger, Superintendent, Vanguard-Sentinel Career & Technology Centers
(Sandusky County, OH)

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Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony today on SB 89. My name is Greg Edinger and I am superintendent of Vanguard-Sentinel Career Center. I will be testifying specifically on the post-secondary credit transcription provisions contained on SB 89 pages 43-45.

Overview

The SB89 language regarding career-tech post-secondary credit aims to simplify two different (career-tech specific) credit granting systems currently utilized by the state: 1) "CTAG" Credit; and 2) Local Articulated Credit. Essentially, we aim to align these systems with the well-recognized and universally understood College Credit Plus system. At a basic level, the language will allow a student to receive their already-guaranteed and "earned" credits on an official transcript in *real time* versus waiting until after graduation / enrollment in a post-secondary institution—as is required under current law.

Because of its structure, students and parents understand the fundamentals of CCP. But when you start talking about CTAG's or Articulated Credit, the same students and parents become confused and have little understanding of the applicable credit-granting process, and what it actually takes for the student to receive the credit on his or her college transcript. Students and parents often do not even realize they are taking college level courses in their technical program of study until told so—but there is no confusion when they take the same exact course under CCP. Once they are dually enrolled in the college there are no extra steps needed to get the CCP course credit awarded on a transcript. Let me explain.

CTAGs

Known as 'Career Technical Assurance Guide" courses, CTAGs are developed by ODHE. CTAGS work by aligning the content of career and technical programs at high schools, career centers, and Ohio Technical Centers with courses at Ohio's community colleges and universities. Once an institution establishes a program or course approved by a panel of faculty experts from around the state, students who complete that program and pass any required assessments are then eligible for college credit at any of Ohio's public colleges or universities that offer the course(s)/ program.

Seems pretty straight forward right? Well, not so much. A couple points:

1. Parents and Students still do not understand it. Folks continuously ask us "How is this different than CCP?" "Is it really college credit?" "Is the credit good at any school?" "When do I receive the credit?" The problem is that these questions are not easy to answer on our end. More explanation below.

2. <u>Earning the Credit</u>: In addition to convincing students / parents that they really are taking college level courses within their program of study at no cost (as contemplated by the state's CTAG program), the actual earning of the credit is another enormous hurdle. There is a 3 step verification process for students to receive their "already earned and approved" credit:

   a. First they must fill out all of their contact information, *including the name of the institution they will be attending (and requesting the credit from).* I will get back to that piece in a second.
   b. Second, the career technical school must verify students have met the required testing scores, credentials and grades.
   c. Third, the career technical school must request, complete, and submit an onerous ODHE verification form. Students cannot complete themselves.

So that takes us back to Step 1, which must be completed prior to Step 3. And this goes to the core of the issue: *Some students may not know exactly where they want to go to college; they may change their mind; they may even take a year off—all very normal. But if the student graduates from our schools and the ODHE verification form has not been completed, the likelihood of the student returning to obtain the credit is <u>zero.</u> Also, if you do not enroll within a certain period of time the CTAG credit expires and cannot be placed on a college transcript at all. In both these scenarios, the student will need to*

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take the course again, which may even discourage them from attending a post-secondary institution.

For the reasons above, we seek to align the CTAG process with CCP as CCP involves none of these extra steps.

To illustrate, anyone in a health program (for the most part) must take Medical Terminology as a course in their program of study. Under this particular course, CTAG credit can be earned, but only through the system outlined above. (Recall that to get on the CTAG list the course content must be vetted and approved by ODHE, which verifies the program meets applicable credit requirements).

However, if a student takes/passes the same exact Medical Terminology course through CCP, he or she receives credit on his/her transcript IMMEDIATELY. No additional steps are required; they need not decide on the post-secondary institution they want to attend after high school; they can take a year off; they have a permanent record of completing and being awarded credit for the course.

Articulated Credit

Articulated agreements take place at the local level, wherein a career technical school enters into agreements with one or more institutions of higher education. There is a process that must be followed in this instance as well.

1. The Career Center works with their post-secondary partner to review curriculum and competencies for any requested programs. Very similar to the CTAG process but completed by the local institution of higher ed rather than ODHE itself. The college vets the program, conducts a robust review of the courses, and often the instructors' credentials are verified. The courses are then established under which post-secondary credit can be earned.

2. These articulated agreements are reviewed every two years to ensure the standards are still being met. In addition, students must achieve certain standards, including passing grades in their particular program of study to be eligible for credit.

3. *However, as with CTAGs, articulated credit may not be awarded until the student graduates high school, enrolls in the institution of higher ed. with which the articulation*

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agreement is in place, fills out a ton of paperwork, formally requests the credit, and then completes "x" number of courses with that school.

Proposed SB 89 Solution

The option were are proposing is to award CTAG / Articulated Credit in the same manner/method as CCP. All of these programs/courses are essentially going through the same vetting / approval process already, whether it is through the state's CTAG system or a bilateral articulation agreement. Recall the CTAG credits are "guaranteed" by the state, and the articulated credits are "guaranteed" by the local post-secondary institution. The only change is to award the credit in real time instead of through a framework that requires schools and students to complete burdensome, costly, and wasteful processes. We realize that procedurally, career-technical schools would need to work with their local institution of higher ed to allow the student to be dually enrolled, so the CTAG and/or articulated course can be provided as post-secondary credit. But we do not believe there should be an additional cumbersome process associated with awarding the credit, or additional costs, other than paying an administrate fee for processing the transcript.

Concerns

We understand concerns have been raised by other higher education stakeholders and we attempt to provide some clear responses / clarifications below. However, note we continue to work on this language with our post-secondary partners and are hopeful we can find compromise.

(1) Concern: there is little oversight regarding CTAG / Articulated Credits. *CCP courses have a higher standard and oversight process*.

    a. **Response**: As stated above, with both CTAG and Articulated credit, there is a vetting and oversight process that occurs through institutions of higher education or ODHE themselves—before any credit is awarded. The competencies, curricula, credentials, end of course assessments, etc. are not less rigorous when compared to the same course in CCP, and instructors in Career Technical Programs have the same qualifications as their higher education counterparts.

(2) Concern: students are not enrolled in an institution of higher education through CTAG or Articulated Credit courses.

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a. **Response:** This is correct at this point in time. Students are not always dually enrolled in a post-secondary institution when taking these courses. However, we believe this can be addressed and regardless, it should not diminish the fact that they have completed and passed all the required competencies for the course. If they were taking the same exact course while dually enrolled in a post-secondary institution, the competencies would be <u>no different</u>.

Alternative Solution

One option we are currently trying to model is combining the three processes (CTAG, Articulated, and CCP) all into one. In so doing, we would attempt to dual enroll our students at both a career-technical school and post-secondary institution. We are still working with our post-secondary partners to explore this potential option.

Closing/Summary

In closing, I would like to point out that we are simply asking to recognize the hard work of our students and their achievements *at the appropriate time* in order to expand the menu of post-secondary options, reduce cost, and increase student flexibility. We seek only to allow our students to receive (guaranteed) credit on their college transcript immediately upon passing a designated "CTAG" or "articulated" course. Doing so will (1) help neutralize the ongoing stigma that Career Tech is a "less than" pathway, when we all know that is not true and (2) eliminate red tape and cost in the credit granting process, and (3) create a system to allow for the seamless transfer of earned, post-secondary credit, which in turn will encourage and support more students' continuing education in technical fields. We are committed to maintaining high standards and believe our CTE students are able to meet these standards.

Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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