**Senate Education Committee – SB 89**

**October 15, 2019**

**Testimony – Jerry Farley, Ed. D**

Chairwoman Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 89.

Good Afternoon,

I could provide you with my credentials and my background as an educator, but I think I will just share that I have more than 12 years of experience in Career Technical Education, specializing in Workforce Development Programs for Ohio’s most vulnerable youth.

Now, as the Vice President for Career Technical Education for Oakmont Education, it is my responsibility to ensure that quality career tech opportunities are available for more than 3,000 opportunity youth in 12 Dropout Recovery High Schools across Ohio stretching from Cincinnati to Cleveland. At enrollment, the typical Oakmont student is: 18 years old, reads at a 5th grade level, has 6 of the required 20 credits needed for graduation and has already been unsuccessful at 2 public high schools. The students in our schools are disproportionately special education, disproportionately low-income, and disproportionately involved in the courts. They have significant barriers in their lives and yet each desires to enter adulthood earning a sustainable living wage.

Our workforce development programs are highly influenced by the work of Steven Covey, in that, we start with the end in mind – and that end – is to develop the entry level workforce that meet the needs of Ohio businesses. At a conference last year, Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted cited a Forbes article in which Ohio ranked in the top 20 for Economic Climate, Business Costs and Regulatory Environment but ranked 43rd in Labor Supply. This gap in Ohio’s workforce is noticeable, especially when looking at Labor Market Information where one can easily identify shortages in high growth/high demand fields such as those in the skilled trades (construction and manufacturing) and healthcare just to name a few. Moreover, just talk to business owners and they will share how the lack of an entry level workforce significantly impacts their business and how they struggle to find workers to fill production and service needs.

At Oakmont schools, we focus on the triumvirate required to prepare Ohio’s next generation of workers: High School Diploma, Soft Skill/Employability Training and Workforce Development that includes both industry credentialing and experiential / service learning. We recognize that for students to learn a craft – and understand the sights, sounds, smells associated with entering that career field – there is no one better to teach them than craftsman – people who have “been there and done that”.

For example:

I have a Master Carpenter with 37 years of experience. He has been a site superintendent on multi-million-dollar jobs, built hundreds of homes and taught over 500 apprentices and is certified NCCER Master Trainer.

I have a chef who owns a restaurant in Dayton, Ohio and is getting ready to launch a second restaurant. She trained in San Francisco and New York City.

I have a healthcare teacher who owns her own company and has taught and certified over 1,000 State tested Nursing Assistants (STNA’s).

All of these individuals have been trained by the credentialing agency to teach the credential that we offer our students. The credential they need to enter the workforce and earn a sustainable living wage. These individuals (and many more like them) are dedicated to helping opportunity youth. They are skilled and passionate about making a difference. They have no desire to attend college nor, I would argue, should they be mandated to do so.

For generations, craftsman and businessmen and women have learned and then taught their craft to others. Skills passed on from one generation of the workforce to another and so on. We live in houses, work in buildings, drive on roads, eat great food and have basic care needs met by healthcare providers all of whom learned their craft without college or college educated instructors.

Having a college education and being a college trained educator with formal instruction in pedagogy is no guarantee of teaching success. One need only look at the agenda for the State Board of Education each month to see the number of professional educators, who despite being formally trained, were required to forfeit their teacher certification.

Currently, there is a 40-hour teaching permit available for those who teach in STEM schools. There is a 12-hour teaching permit available for those who teach career-tech such as in the skilled trades. Why is there a difference? Those trained in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math are no better prepared to teach than craftsman. They have no better understanding of pedagogy and are not required to receive formal college training in education. Why should this opportunity be denied to CTE teachers? Surely training a carpenter or a plumber or a machinist or a phlebotomist requires more than 12 hours a week, especially given the additional time often required to help opportunity youth master these skills and earn the credential.

I also find it ironic that we currently tell our students that they do not need college to realize their dreams and experience financial success but then turn around and tell adults who choose a non-college pathway to success - that now - they must have college training in order to prove their competence. Industry credentialing can significantly improve the trajectory of students served in DOR schools but we must be able to hire craftsman - skilled, dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate to teach our students. We need these individuals to lead our youth into the workforce and not frighten them away from accepting a teaching position because we insist that, as a condition of employment, they must now attend college.

All that is being asked is an option for Dropout Recovery Schools to be allowed to provide our CTE teachers with a 40-hour teaching permit rather than be required to enroll them in a college program. I am not asking that anything be taken away from traditional schools, Career Tech Centers or Joint Vocational Schools who teach full pathway curricula - and nothing, in the proposed language, applies to what they do or how they work with their staff and students.