



June 13, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee - thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB71 on behalf of the ESC of Eastern Ohio and our local school districts.

My name is Dr. Traci Hostetler. I am the Superintendent at the Educational Service Center of Eastern Ohio, located in Mahoning County. Before my tenure at the ESC, I was the Superintendent of East Palestine City School District in Columbiana County. I am closing my 8th year as a Superintendent in Ohio and my 14th in educational administration.

I have seen many changes in my career. That's not a complaint. I believe strongly in the need to continually learn, improve, and educate. However, there is a significant problem that persists in education today. This problem is not exclusive to public schools; it also happens in private, charter, and even home-school settings. It happens in every school setting in our nation. I can explain the problem best in an analogy.

In a relay race, runners pass the baton to someone waiting to begin the next leg of the journey. The person waiting grabs the baton and runs the next segment of the race. In education, we also pass the baton. We do it annually. Each fall, a new teacher is waiting to support our students as they grow, learn, and discover new things. Except when they graduate. When a student graduates, we pass the baton, but no one is waiting. Students find themselves facing monumental decisions that they feel ill-prepared to make. That's not to say that they received an improper education. Schools in Ohio teach the standards that are legislated. It is, however, a hole in our system that needs to be mended. Our role as educators is to ensure students graduate ready to enroll, enlist, or employ, but who is there to help them make that final, important, first connection into adulthood?

Many students graduate unsure of what the next steps are. Many start college only to drop out in the first year. Thinkimpact.com cites that about 30% of students drop out in the first year, and only 41% graduate in 4 years. Forbes cites that three-quarters of the one million students that drop out of college every year are first-generation college students. Creditdonkey.com reports that almost 60% of college students are not done with their degrees after six years.

I need to be clear. I am NOT against college. Quite the contrary. I've invested a significant amount of time in further education. Instead, I provide this testimony to emphasize the importance of ensuring students are aware of options, have exposure to careers in their area, and are supported to make certain they choose their post-high school pathways with clarity.

#### ALIGNED MEMBER DISTRICTS

Austintown | Beaver | Boardman | Campbell | Canfield | Columbiana | East Palestine | Jackson-Milton | Lowellville | MCCTC | Poland  
Rootstown | Sebring | South Range | Southeast | Springfield | Struthers | West Branch | Western Reserve | Windham | Youngstown

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At the ESCEO, we have been providing career counseling services to the students in our region for the past 7 years. We began with a grant servicing 8 districts and moved toward a fee for the service. We now serve more than 25 districts across five counties. We monitor each student to ensure they're on track and that they're pointed in the right direction. This year, we focused on 506 students that were deemed "at-risk" for not meeting 2023 graduation requirements. Through the work of our Career Counselors, 487 (96.2%) of those at-risk students graduated. In the past two years, 248 students earned a pre-apprenticeship certificate and 104 of them were either accepted into an apprenticeship, hired into a non-union construction position, or declared entry into a construction related field post-graduation.

We rely heavily on grants to support the programming and equipment we utilize to offer exposure, guidance, pre-apprenticeships, and Industry Recognized Credentials. We also use grants to subsidize the work of our team. As the demand for this important work grows, we find ourselves needing financial assistance that we can rely upon. It's important work. It's impactful work.

Support of our legislature through HB71 would enable us to create a division of our career counseling department focusing solely on high school students' professional skill training and soft-skills development. It would ensure that we have the resources we need to impact that next step for our seniors. Funding through HB71 would ensure someone is there to catch the baton as seniors enter life after high school.

Thank you for your time and positive consideration. It truly means a lot to our students and our region.

Sincerely,



Dr. Traci Hostetler  
Superintendent