

We are writing this opponent testimony to HB 432, which we believe makes a significant change in the way career-tech (CTE) teachers can be licensed in Ohio. Thank you in advance for taking the time to read our concerns with this bill.

Please know, we have over 60 years of experience (combined) as career-tech teachers, administrators, and university teacher educators. We also have advanced degrees in Vocational Education. In our present positions at Ohio State, Kent State and Rio Grande University, we have worked with more than 1000 CTE teachers and 60 school districts in the last 20 years, so we are keenly aware of the challenges we face with recruiting, training and retaining quality CTE teachers.

Having said that, we firmly believe this bill will have some significantly negative and unintended consequences if it goes into law. Please also know the five universities that offer CTE teacher education were not asked to be a part of any conversation regarding any type of new alternative pathway to licensure. When the initial discussions began, we asked if we could be part of the discussion and we were told the universities were not invited. We eventually were allowed to propose a lesser version of what is required at the present time, that would have resulted in a 40% reduction in credit hours and fiscal cost to a teacher and a school district, all while maintaining a bare minimum of teacher preparation. It was rejected by the group advocating for these new pathways without any discussion with us.

The most obvious issue with these new pathways is that they do not remotely equal what is required (and has been required by the state of Ohio for decades) to be a CTE teacher. The ninety clock hours of professional development corresponds to six (6) credit hours of college coursework. The other items in the pathway (a self-assessment, working with a mentor and a personal learning plan) are already required by the current license for CTE, so this pathway equates to 25% of what is required by the present CTE license. The other pathway in the bill is roughly half of what is presently required. There is no measuring stick that can be used that will show that teachers going through these new pathways will be as well prepared as the ones in our programs. These pathways will also allow teachers to bypass the Ohio reading course that every license, regardless of type, requires. This is especially concerning given the governor's focus on reading.

As a result of permitting a program that is a fraction of what is required at present, we believe (as do our colleagues at Bowling Green and Toledo) that there are many consequences that have not been considered. First, implementing the pathway that removes any university coursework will likely lead to the end of some, if not all the five university programs that presently serve our teachers. If even one-fourth of the school districts choose to mentor their own teachers and we see enrollments drop by that one-fourth, it will have enough of an effect to cause programs to close. The other $\frac{3}{4}$ of the school districts that rely on us will not have the option to send their teachers to us. They will be forced to develop and deliver their own programs. We have talked to several principals and superintendents. They have told us they are already strapped for personnel and do not have the resources to deliver their own in-house program. They count on us. These new pathways will cause some university closures and force districts to invest resources in their own programs, most of whom will not be able to.

Our university CTE programs have challenges. Our programs are "high-touch" – we mentor teachers for their entire first year with on-site visits, and they are time-intensive. We receive some funding from ODE to offer our summer workshop and to mentor the new teachers, but that funding (through the Perkins Act) has been flat for 7 years, and it is half of what it was in 2000. We used to be able to offer courses to schools on-site, additional seminars and other activities that significantly contributed to teacher

retention. There has been no increase in resources to the universities for 7 years, and we are doing the best we can with the resources we have. It pains us to see states like Kansas, Texas and Montana making investments in CTE teacher education, and Ohio's response is to lower the bar for licensure. The other aspect of the funding is that if that one-fourth of schools don't utilize the universities, then ODE may use that as a reason to cut our funding even more, which will just hasten our closure.

We have heard that some administrators believe cutting out courses will relieve the teacher shortage, and as individuals who have studied and researched this issue, we know this to be false. Studies across the country have shown the biggest barrier to recruiting teachers is the salary differential. Secretary of Education Cardona testified to this fact to Congress several months ago. The state of Alabama, which has virtually no CTE teacher education requirements, has CTE teacher shortages, so lowering the bar will do nothing except fill CTE courses with poorly-prepared teachers. Having our teachers take no university courses puts Ohio in the company of states (many in the south) whose CTE programs are not known for their quality. People like former governor Rhodes and Beryl Shoemaker, who built the structure of Ohio's vocational education system, recognized the need for high-quality teacher education for our vocational teachers, and thus partnered with Ohio's university to build excellent teacher education programs.

As a state, we are developing more and more articulated career pathways between secondary and postsecondary education. Our CTE teachers are here on campus for classes, they take visits to postsecondary schools as part of their courses, and they are bringing their students to campus for tours. There is a direct connection between secondary and postsecondary education. One of these new pathways will allow a teacher to get licensed without ever setting foot on a campus, which makes us wonder how they will be an effective "conduit" for their students. It also makes us wonder what this will do to the perceptions of other educators, parents and policymakers. "Vocational education" has battled for decades to improve its image. Now we will fully license teachers without any university coursework. That is a giant step backward.

The language around the proposed bill spoke of removing barriers for teachers. Two of the co-authors went through this or similar program many years ago, and we drove from our career center once a week for classes. We considered it a professional responsibility, not a barrier. We can confidently state all of my teachers would say they need these courses, and they benefit from being able to network with other CTE teachers in the class from across the region (that won't be possible with these new pathways). We have been told that the main reason for this change is because administrators don't want to pay for the courses, and they don't want to pay additional salary when a teacher gets a degree along with licensure completion. To us, that is very short-sighted. It also denies those teachers who want to get a degree (such as a master's) that would actually allow their pay to increase, which is a key to retention. We assume the majority of these schools have tuition reimbursement and reimburse their academic teachers for courses taken to renew their licenses, but they don't want to pay for initial CTE licensure courses. We do not see the logic in that.

The last aspect we don't think has been considered is that the districts who develop the mentoring program will also be evaluating these teachers. One of the many benefits of the university site visits and courses is we are only there to help the teacher – we are someone they can confide in without fear of repercussions. We have talked many teacher "off the cliff" when they were not sure if they were cut out for teaching. That won't happen when the employer is both mentoring and evaluating. That may seem like a small thing but is a significant benefit for a new teacher to have a mentor who is not deciding if they keep their job.

The five career and technical education institutions have a long history with vocational/CTE teacher education. People on the committee who proposed these new pathways don't seem to believe that this new law will affect CTE teacher education. We only need to look at recent events at Wright State and Kent State to know their thinking is off-base – our programs will eventually close, some sooner than others. Our question for you, therefore, is: Do you want CTE teacher preparation programs at Ohio's universities? If you do, we ask you to reconsider this bill. Our colleagues and us would be very willing to explore options that maintain our programs and address some of the concerns local districts have. It would take a collaborative effort, one that we have not been a part of, but we are willing to be.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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