

Testimony for HB 432

CTE Licensure Bill

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee:

My name is Connie Altier, and I proudly serve as the Superintendent of Tri-County Career Center in Nelsonville, Ohio. For over 30 years, I have been dedicated to this district, with the last seven years focused on leading our center's mission to provide exceptional educational services to high school and adult learners across Southeastern Ohio. Tri-County Career Center offers 23 specialized career programs to students from eight neighboring high schools, and our enrollment has grown steadily, increasing by an impressive 40 to 60 students each year.

This remarkable growth highlights a pressing challenge in recruiting skilled Career Tech Teachers to support our expanding career fields. Unlike other fields, there isn't an annual influx of graduates from Ohio colleges ready to fill these roles. When vacancies arise, we often turn to our Advisory Committee members and alumni, yet securing qualified candidates with both the technical expertise and teaching potential requires extensive onboarding. These individuals, often industry experts with years of field experience, must be willing to dedicate up to four additional years to obtain a teaching license. This process entails not only understanding the demands of our educational institution but also mastering effective teaching methods—a significant adjustment for those unfamiliar with the academic environment, especially if they come from industry-focused careers like AEP Linemen.

Moreover, transitioning professionals face considerable financial adjustments, as teaching salaries are generally lower than technical industry wages. To make this shift, they must navigate unfamiliar educational terminology, complete required college coursework, often during evenings and weekends, and travel to one of the limited institutions in Ohio offering this training. Even licensed teachers from academic disciplines face repetitive coursework to transition into career tech, covering topics they may have already encountered in their undergraduate studies. These hurdles underline the critical need for a streamlined, supportive system to recruit and train career tech educators.

House Bill 432 introduces essential reforms to Ohio's career-technical licensure process that support this goal. It allows candidates to apply for licensure through the State Board of Education without first securing a job offer from a specific district, providing flexibility to teach across multiple districts. This bill creates alternative pathways for license applicants through

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specialized, district-led educator preparation programs, offering focused coursework and relevant professional development at the local level. Additionally, applicants can choose a two-year alternative licensure route supported by district mentorship and tailored learning plans.

These legislative changes grant Career Tech Superintendents expanded recruitment options and ensure educators receive professional development tailored to the unique demands of career-tech instruction. I have worked closely with our new career tech teachers to support them through their college coursework, gaining firsthand insight into the requirements they face. While the general content is helpful, it does not always align with the specific needs of my center and students. H.B. 432 would allow us to provide professional development that is more relevant and meaningful to their career fields and students' needs.

This bill represents a significant step in supporting Ohio's Career Technical Education (CTE) programs by enabling us to better attract, train, and retain the instructors who are vital to our students' success. I urge your support for H.B. 432 and deeply appreciate your consideration of this crucial initiative.