

To: Members of the Education Committee
From: Melanie Kirin, Former Career Technical Education Teacher
RE: Opposition to H. B. No. 432
November 19, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I regret that I cannot attend today's hearing in person due to teaching obligations, but I am writing to strongly oppose H.B. No. 432. I submit this testimony independently, not as an official act of Kent State University, where I currently serve as a lecturer in Career Technical Teacher Education.

Throughout this legislative process, it has been wonderful to hear the praises of Ohio's CTE programs and teachers. When I was a high school student in the 1990s, I would never have considered being a "Vo-ed Kid." That was for students who couldn't cut it in the traditional classroom. Now, I live in Brecksville and many of my daughter's classmates attend Cuyahoga Valley Career Center. They are taking EMT, nursing, engineering, and exercise science courses. These students are extremely bright and have serious career goals. The tide has changed, and CTE is not yesterday's Vo-ed.

Please do not break what is working so well and what so many have worked hard to create. CTE education, in Ohio, is outstanding. In the past two months, I have been in thirty different CTE programs from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. I have worked with teachers in urban and rural environments, in traditional high schools like Shaw High in East Cleveland, and career centers like Polaris (Middleburg Heights) and Columbiana County Career Center. I have spent roughly 100 hours working directly with new teachers in their classrooms. These amazing new teachers all have something in common – they are learning to teach what they love. Each has unique challenges from differentiated instruction to classroom management, and it is a privilege to work with them to become a highly qualified teacher.

My written testimony serves as a foreshadowing of the consequences of the passage of this bill.

1. Teachers are the point of instruction for all students, including CTE students. CTE teachers are real teachers and should be required to have the best knowledge, methodologies, experiences, and support to in turn provide exceptional educational opportunities for CTE students. This is what you experience in a modern Ohio CTE classroom today. This bill severely weakens teacher preparation. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.
2. CTE teachers are required to teach technical acumen, professional skill development, and academic skills. Last week I visited Polaris Career Center and worked with their new HVAC teacher. He taught a group of juniors how an air conditioner works. He was actually teaching a science class and an English language arts class. He then had students work together to diagram components. He was teaching collaboration and critical thinking. I have witnessed anatomy and physiology in cosmetology and exercise science, algebra in business courses, and coding and logic in machining. These teachers know their trade, but they need significant support on how to assess, teach, and plan for the holistic nature of their profession. This bill severely weakens teacher preparation. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.

3. Currently, CTE licensure requires twenty-four credit hours for advancement to professional licensure. These teachers complete the required coursework over a period of two years while they are in the classroom. When I received my marketing degree from Miami University (OH) which was required by my employer (Anderson Consulting), the degree was 124 credit hours. My role as a teacher was more important than my role as an analyst, yet, the educational requirements don't demonstrate this importance. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.
4. Proponents of this bill state this will ease hiring challenges. There is no data to support this. This is a huge red flag. Yes, it is a challenge to become a CTE teacher. When I started my licensure process at Kent State University, my daughter was entering kindergarten. I had to hire babysitters so I could go to campus and take coursework. This was a necessary sacrifice to ensure I was my best for the students at Bedford High School. Thankfully, the university now utilizes a hybrid model, but new teachers still need to invest their time, money, and family. New teachers have several university options that help them to balance this investment. *CTE students aren't an adult's backup choice of career.* This is a serious role that requires serious investment. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.
5. H.B. No. 432 eliminates the educational advancement of new CTE teachers. Almost half of the new CTE teachers at Kent State University go on to get their master's degrees. Last year, the university graduated two CTE doctoral students. New teachers with an associate's degree can use their licensure credits towards earning an undergraduate degree. For these teachers, each advanced degree not only gives them more opportunities for advanced knowledge, it also shifts their earning brackets. I earned my master's in education from Kent State University and currently finishing my coursework in the Curriculum and Design Ph.D. program. I am researching language literacy instructional best practices for CTE programs. Had I not been allowed to earn a legitimate license at an approved higher education institution, I would have been stuck professionally and been unable to propel the discipline forward. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.

I am a proponent of streamlining good ideas. I am a proponent of reducing "checklist" education. I am a proponent of equipping CTE teachers and students with skills and abilities for success. I am for local control. This bill doesn't accomplish these things. What do you do when the local control isn't qualified? What do you do when schools shortcut the process to save money? What do you do when local administrators are told they need to cut costs but cannot support the licensure process of new CTE teachers? What do you do with administrator turnover or a district without a CTE administrator? How does this impact the new CTE teacher as a professional teacher? Mentors do not replace objective-oriented coursework focused on diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments where new teachers create project-based learning units for their students. Local mentors do not replace the valuable collaboration that occurs when all the new HVAC, nursing, and robotics, teachers come to campus. We will have less qualified teachers in the classroom.

All new licensure teachers come to campus on a Saturday morning in September. The very first thing I have them do is to say collectively, "I am a teacher." Each year, this group of roughly fifty new teachers struggles to say this phrase. We repeat it often throughout the semester. It's in every email I send them. These wonderful professionals already have an imposter complex. They are unsure if they are going to

make it in the classroom. Some of these teachers are overwhelmed by technology, many didn't like high school as students, and most go into unsupported programs that they now have to rebuild. But, they have determined they are now teachers, and they deserve the opportunity to be real teachers. I am asking Ohio's legislators to support their commitment and my commitment to ensuring Ohio's CTE students get the very best.

In closing, I am happy to sit down with you and discuss the amazing teaching I see throughout the state in our CTE classrooms. I am happy to share with you the research I am doing on language literacy and the science of reading in CTE. I am happy to solve challenges – this is what CTE teachers do.

Respectfully,

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