



Senate Finance Committee
June 7, 2023
Ohio School Counselor Association
HB 33 – Interested Party Testimony

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Ohio School Counselor Association today. My name is Jill Minor and I am a licensed school counselor and member of OSCA's Government Relations Committee. OSCA respectfully requests removal of language in HB 33 carried over from the House's version of the bill establishing a new license requirement for school counselors (Sec. 3319.2213). The language requires 12 hours of training in building & construction trades careers in person at a construction site or training facility as part of the required internship hours in order for a school counselor to earn his or her initial license. In addition, the language requires 4 hours of this same in-person training every time a school counselor renews their license.

OSCA is supportive of general efforts to promote awareness of these careers among school counselors, but requiring this training as part of licensure creates a mandate that is untrackable by ODE, forces education through an unauthorized CE provider, puts school counselors' licenses at risk, creates preferential treatment for one career pathway, and makes continuing education more prescriptive and less flexible.

Sec. 3319.2213 provides no mechanism by which ODE could track the 12 initial required internship hours, especially considering internship hours are not overseen by ODE, but by the higher education institution counselors attend for their master's. Thus, OSCA shares ODE's concerns about its ability to enforce this proposed requirement. In addition, importantly, neither the training facilities that currently exist nor their governing organization have received authorization to act as CE providers. Our members are very concerned that creating a new license requirement in statute that mandates CE training with a provider whose CEs cannot be accepted is bad public policy and sets school counselors up for failure. Further, requiring school counselors to be on a construction site for 12 hours is an excessive timeframe that is dangerous and presents liability issues.

The practical issues are just some of the problems with this language. This requirement is not appropriate for all school counselors, particularly elementary school counselors whose career services are high level and who should be spending more of their CE hours on other, more relevant developmental trends. Regarding the ongoing education, a four-hour requirement every 5 years through the entire life of a school counselor's license is duplicative, inefficient, and curtails professional development in other key school counselor domain areas.

Finally, there are many well-paid, rewarding, in-demand careers deserving of student attention. It is a school counselor's job to provide unbiased information about all of the pathways that play to students' strengths. This new language sets a precedent of earmarking training in statute for specific industries, with no relation to market trends or current in-demand jobs. This could set the stage for other career areas to seek similar treatment, adding to licensure burdens and removing flexibility for licensees. With current student-to-school counselor ratios at 401:1, there are already not enough employed school counselors to thoughtfully serve Ohio students. OSCA urges the Legislature not to pursue policies that might make it harder for school counselors to become licensed in Ohio and reduce student access to critical career and academic support services.

Instead, we would recommend building & construction trades facilities first earn their CE provider status, and then work with OSCA to ensure their courses are widely advertised to school counselors. Once success of those courses are measured, OSCA would be happy to support any reasonable, evidence-based statutory changes based on that data. Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions.