

Testimony in Support of House Bill 429
House Economic & Workforce Development Committee
February 24, 2016
Bill Garling

Madam Chair and Committee members:

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak before you this morning on HB 429.

My name is Bill Garling and I am the Chief Operating Officer for the United Equipment Dealers Association and the Ohio Equipment Distributors Association. Combined, 425 member-locations in these two associations serve the agricultural, construction and outdoor power equipment industries in Ohio.

On behalf of these members throughout Ohio, we urge you to support expanding the scope of HB 429, the Incumbent Workforce Training Voucher Program, to include workers employed as automotive and motor vehicle technicians.

Every one of our equipment dealer-members has highly-skilled technicians who need continual training to enhance and upgrade their skills in order to meet the changing technological advances being incorporated into today's equipment.

Some of these advances include:

- Analyzing the on-board computerized diagnostic software being included on most new models (similar to the diagnostics in automobiles and trucks);

- Meeting EPA-mandated environmental standards for reducing air particulates via Tier III and now Tier IV engine requirements;

- Addressing the integrated telematics hardware and software for precision agriculture equipment and land-grading construction equipment;

And now, technicians must learn how to regulate and repair autonomous, or driverless, tractors and equipment. John Deere has been working on this technology since 2008, and other manufacturers like Case IH, Fendt, and Kinze, are adding their equipment to the mix.

Ongoing training is usually required by the manufacturers. For example, Case IH requires re-certification of technicians every three years, amounting to about 100 hours of training per year either in the classroom or online. And these training costs are the dealers' responsibility.

This training is not cheap. Evolution Ag, a Case IH dealer here in central Ohio, has 7 locations with 28 technicians. They reported to me that their training costs in 2015 surpassed \$105,000. This averages about \$3,700 per technician annually.

From our latest confidential Wage & Salary Survey, conducted in the 4th quarter 2015, the median compensation for Entry Level Technicians is \$35,700, ranging up to \$42,000; the median compensation for Experienced Technicians is \$44,500, ranging up to \$58,000; and the median compensation for Top Technicians is \$54,900, ranging up to \$76,600.

By including automotive and motor vehicle repair technicians and their employers to the eligible list of applicants, I believe HB 429 is consistent with the program's goals to allow Ohio employers to retain these vital employees. I also believe HB 429 is consistent with the program's goal by limiting the available funds to skilled employees in technical jobs.

As I have stated, the technicians servicing Ohio's agricultural, construction, and outdoor power equipment are definitely highly skilled, and they need ongoing training. Including these technicians in the voucher program will help offset these burdensome, but essential costs to Ohio equipment dealers.

I urge you to pass HB 429 this session. Thank you for your time.