



Testimony before the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce
Committee on House Bill 4
Wednesday, October 9, 2019

Good morning Chairman McColley, Ranking Minority Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 4. I am Tom Walsh, Vice President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the presidents and trustees of all twenty-three of the state's public community colleges. OACC believes this legislation sends a strong, bipartisan message on the urgency to better streamline our job training programs in order to more quickly respond to the needs of business and industry.

One of the most critical issue facing Ohio's business community is the lack of skilled workers to fill open positions. Due to advances in technology and automation, Ohio's economy and the skills necessary are changing at an unprecedented pace. Technological innovations are having a profound impact on today's economy. They will also continue to impact the future of our workforce, our jobs, and the skills needed for those jobs. Further, the velocity of this change will be unmatched compared to historical standards.

To keep up with the needs of business in a 21st century workplace, we must strengthen our efforts to prepare and continuously retrain Ohioans for the technology-intensive jobs of tomorrow. If Ohio is going to be a leader in the new economy and meet the "Complete to Compete" goal of having 65% of adults with a postsecondary credential, it is imperative for the state and all postsecondary training providers to better align the training, skills and competencies of our programs with the needs of employers. Just as our economy is rapidly changing, our colleges, universities and other education providers must also adapt to quickly respond to the needs of our business partners.

Ohio's community colleges are playing an important role in filling the workforce needs throughout our state. Our colleges have increased the number of credentials awarded by 8.5%, during a time when our overall enrollment has declined due to the good economy. Additionally, as the following chart indicates, Ohio's community colleges are focused on offering more short-term certificates and industry-recognized credentials to respond to the increasing need of both our student and employers who need these agile, applied competencies and skills for both incumbent and prospective workers.



Aligning workforce training to the needs of business is a key strategy our institutions are embracing to ensure workers have the skills necessary to secure gainful employment and businesses have access to qualified candidates. For our industry partners, these job training programs are an efficient and cost-efficient way to help prepare a skilled and productive workforce.

HB 4 supports the Office of Workforce Transformation’s mission to give businesses a stronger voice with state agencies and our educational institutions so we can all work collaboratively on behalf of Ohio workers. By improving coordination between the public and private sectors, HB 4 will lead to a more skilled, agile and dynamic workforce. Ohio is at a crossroads in how we link our postsecondary education and job training with the modernized skills necessary to move Ohioans into rewarding and self-sustaining careers and HB 4 is one more tool that can be used to better prepare workers to fill the jobs of today as well as tomorrow.

Chairman McColley and members of the committee, once again thank for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 4. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.