



Representative DJ Swearingen

House Bill 303 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Edwards, Vice-Chair Powell, Ranking Member Upchurch, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on HB 303. It is the role of our education system to set up kids with skills to carry on once they graduate, I think we are seeing a decline in that kind of education. This bill will help get our educational system on track and ensure kids have avenues to choose from to succeed in society. This is done in a few ways listed in the bill.

Firstly, this bill will help set up career technical training through the schools and partners with employers in the area to train them in a trade. One of the programs that the bill lays out is the employer work-based learning pilot program. The bill will also seek to allow the BWC to offer discounts on premium rates for employers participating in the program, as well as prohibiting increases to liability insurance as a result of employing minors.

Secondly, there are financial incentives for businesses as well, who partner with schools to set up these kinds of programs. This bill directs ODE to establish an incentive program to improve and expand upon career-technical education programming. The grant will offer tax incentives for participating businesses, including a credit on 15% of the income tax that an employer must remit to the state on behalf of the student-worker.

Thirdly, it helps students who are working in these programs to gain some independence by helping them acquire their driver's license. This is done by supporting driver's education courses as part of high-school CTE graduation pathways. Currently, we are facing an issue where students engaging in current work-based learning programs are unable to actually get to work. This will also relieve some of the workload parents face when trying to schedule their kids training to get driver's license.

As I said in the beginning of my testimony, making sure students have a skill set as they head to a part of their life outside of school is paramount to any education system's goals. As we move further into the future, we are facing a natural work shortage the likes this country has not faced in quite some time, if ever. In times of uncertain worker shortages and the pressuring of students to choose one path in order to be able to live the American dream, this bill is more important than ever before. Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions today from the committee.