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May 25, 2021

**Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Hearing on Senate Bill 166 (Career-Technical Education)
Proponent Testimony of Gregory T. Hyland, President
Cooper Electric**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Gregory T. Hyland and I am the President of Cooper Electric, a 75-year-old electrical contracting company located in Cincinnati, Ohio. I am a veteran of 51 years in the electrical construction industry. Cooper Electric employs 33 people, and annually contracts for over six-million-dollars’ worth of electrical work. I am extremely proud of my long association with career centers in the State of Ohio, having hired my first Co-op from Scarlet Oaks in the Great Oaks Joint Vocational School District (JVSD) in the fall of 1977. I believe Senate Bill 166 will enhance workforce development in the State of Ohio and support the bill for the following reasons:

Driver Education as Course Credit / Credential:

The unfortunate reality today is that many Co-op Positions, Internships, and Job Shadowing opportunities for high school career tech students go unfilled simply because students do not have driver’s licenses, and as a result cannot drive to the job locations. Anything that could be done to provide students with the opportunity to complete driver’s education as part of their curriculum would not only be advantageous to the students themselves, but would also be of great benefit to businesses in Ohio like Cooper Electric, where frequently entry level jobs go unfilled because of a lack of access to transportation.

I would like to illustrate my point by describing an incredible success story of a recent graduate of Great Oaks Career Campuses. Our employee Tyler Drew (his name used with his permission) has just graduated from apprenticeship school and has passed written examinations for a journeyman electrician’s license in two different jurisdictions.

What makes his story special is that Tyler just graduated three years ago. Becoming a Journeyman Electrician in three years when it normally takes four years was possible because Tyler was part of a Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) and started his apprenticeship as a senior at Diamond Oaks, when he started to Co-op at Cooper Electric. What a great Win-Win outcome! Cooper Electric adds another trained Journeymen Electrician to our workforce, and Tyler Drew has the wages, benefits, and prestige of being a Licensed Journeyman Electrician just three years out of high school.

But there is a very important detail that I have left out of this story:

Tyler did not get his driver’s license until after he turned 18 years old because he could not afford the amount of money it would take to pay for driver’s education. He was very fortunate that his

grandfather was willing to pick him up from school and drive him to his Co-op job at Cooper Electric, so he could start his apprenticeship as a senior in high school. Unfortunately, this is by far the exception rather than the rule. The question is: What happens to the job opportunities for career technical students that do not have a generous grandfather like Tyler or a driver's license? The answer is simple: Lost opportunity.

If SB 166 is enacted and Driver's Education is incorporated into high school career technical training, there can be no question that the students will be better prepared to make the transition from school to work. SB 166 also allows career-tech schools to pull supplemental (weighted) funding to pay a portion of the costs necessary to support driver's education courses, further facilitating their enrollment / completion.

Employers Providing Work-Based Learning Pilot Program:

I have been a 44-year advocate for career technical training. I have hired and continue to hire career-tech students; I have encouraged parents to consider sending their sons and daughters to career technical programs; and just as importantly, I have encouraged my friends and associates in the business community to get involved in supporting and hiring students for Co-op Positions, Internships, and Job Shadowing.

Regrettably, some employers hesitate to get involved with high school career tech students simply because they don't understand that currently, a student participating in a career-technical program approved by the Ohio Department of Education is exempt from Ohio's Minor Labor Law(s). On this point, I believe all stakeholders (including the education community, regulators, and businesses alike) must work to enhance awareness of the exemption.

In addition, it has been my experience that potential business partners to career technical training programs live in fear that a Bureau of Workers' Compensation claim involving a participating career-tech student could have a devastating impact on their BWC Experience Modification Rate (EMR). In my opinion, anything that could be done to incentivize or hold employers harmless as it relates to their EMR (in conjunction with the employment of minors) would definitely have an impact on creating more job opportunities for career technical students. SB 166 includes provisions limiting increases to insurance premiums purely as a result of high school work based learning programs, and allowing the BWC to grant a discount on premium rates for participating employers. I support these provisions, which would serve to mitigate some of the insurance-related impediments I just described.

Finally, the proposed withholding tax credit is a perfect way to reward employers for their willingness to hire and train students in career training programs. The tax credit would offset some of the expenses that businesses incur when they hire inexperienced employees.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Gregory T. Hyland

Gregory T. Hyland
President Cooper Electric