



Ezra C. Escudero, Coalitions Director
HOUSE EDUCATION & CAREER READINESS COMMITTEE
Opponent Testimony on House Bill 154
Tuesday, June 20, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Ezra Escudero and I am the Ohio Coalitions Director of Americans for Prosperity, the state's largest grassroots advocate for free markets. As I represent tens of thousands of AFP activists in Ohio who believe in and work for a free society, I urge you to oppose House Bill 154, which would provide a benefit to a specific industry and raise educational costs for vocational education.

It's no secret our current education system is in dire need of reform. Students at the high school level and even younger are often pressured to attend a four-year university, and after graduation they lack the high-demand skills necessary to earn enough to pay back their substantial student debt. On average, a college graduate ends up with \$30,000 in debt, which many struggle mightily to pay off.

At the same time, vocational education such as electrical, plumbing, and carpentry is looked down upon with little dignity and respect, even though it often provides immediate job opportunities with higher starting salaries for those working in those fields.

In this respect, House Bill 154 should be commended in recognizing the value of skills gained through a vocational education outside of the typical college program. Unfortunately, this bill will borrow some of the worst features of this system to the detriment of students.

It's no accident that the cost of college tuition started to skyrocket as the federal government became more and more involved in the financing of higher education. Specifically, as the government began providing guaranteed loans to students, colleges responded by raising their prices, causing students to take on more and more debt.

This is true in other industries as well. For example, cosmetology schools are able to charge students tens of thousands of dollars more in tuition and fees because the state requires such prolonged training to work in this occupation. The level to which schools can increase tuition and still attract students has only increased once cosmetology students became eligible for government loans.

Rather than simply passing a well-intentioned program that will increase student debt and decrease affordability, Ohio should look towards alternative educational approaches that would increase access while not increasing costs.

I urge you to reject House Bill 154 so that we do not repeat the same mistakes as the rest of the education industry.

Sincerely,

Ezra Escudero
Coalitions Director
Americans for Prosperity – Ohio