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Workforce and Higher Education
Governor’s Executive Workforce Board

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From: Senator Bill Reineke
Date: March 21, 2023
RE: Sponsor Testimony: SB 1

Chairman Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and Members of the House Economic Development and Workforce Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 1.

Approximately 7 years ago, I met with my local school officials to discuss educational issues. Consequently, I became involved in education, never thinking or knowing that severe issues existed within the ODE educational system. I am from the business world, so I just assumed all was good with the education world. I have since learned that there is an awkward relationship between education and the business world.

The bill’s focus is to improve academic and workforce skills to drive better accountability and outcomes for our kids’ education and career readiness. Our children deserve strong educations that prepare them for their futures, and we must hold government accountable. Our citizens, our taxpayers, deserve a return on their investment.

It is the remediation rate that jumped out at me. Ohio’s Remediation Report stated that the remediation rate for students enrolling in a math or English remediation class sits at 19.3%, Roughly 1 out of 5, pre-COVID, are not prepared for post-secondary instruction or life outside the classroom.¹ Meanwhile, far too many K-12 students in Ohio are falling behind in their learning. The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report shows that Ohio fourth graders and eighth graders have fallen drastically behind in both reading and math.² This data demonstrates significant problems within our education system that are failing our children.

When I visited with ODE in November of 2016, I was surprised to learn that there are 4 pathways to a high school graduation. In addition to academic struggles, we are not effectively connecting our students to their purpose. The traditional path, involving students taking the ACT or SAT and going to college is the most common pathway that our schools direct our students through. And appropriate for many students who plan to earn a degree at a higher education

¹ [2021 Ohio Remediation Report](#)

² [National Assessment of Educational Progress in Ohio](#)

institution after graduating high school. But many young people simply are not aware of the options available to them should they choose another path in career-oriented education. In 2016, we had three employees at ODE dealing with career tech; today we have 37. I would argue that we stigmatize these programs by not accommodating “a student’s purpose” through our schools as a viable choice. These programs all too frequently are not considered equals to more traditional college-focused pathways, but they deserve elevation and promotion for what they teach students about their futures and themselves.

Furthermore, this current system fails our students’ abilities to attain success in the workforce. According to the Ohio Department of Higher Education, Ohio’s postsecondary attainment is not keeping up with the needs of business, which has led us to a massive talent gap. Between 2018 and 2028, 75% of Ohio’s job growth will be in occupations requiring at least a postsecondary non-degree credential, and over 50% will require a bachelor’s degree or higher.³ Despite this growing need, our students are not receiving the education they need for the jobs of today or tomorrow.

The evidence shows there is a need for systemic change in our education system to ensure our kids become well-educated and career-ready adults after graduation. SB 1 addresses this need by refocusing our system on what matters most: Ohio’s students.

Under SB 1, the Department of Education will become a state-level agency called the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) with a dual focus on primary and secondary education and preparing students for the workforce. The department will be led by a Director who is appointed by the Governor and subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. The Department will consist of two divisions: the Division of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Division of Career Technical Education. Both divisions will be headed by deputy directors. The Department will be generally responsible for enforcing rules under the Ohio Administrative Code and adopting new rules as required by law. This design promotes communication and collaboration between schools and education leaders to ensure accountability and transparency.

The bill also makes changes to the State Board of Education (SBOE). The Ohio Constitution establishes the SBOE and specifies that the board selects the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Ohio’s constitution states that the specific roles and duties of the board are left to the General Assembly to establish through law. It is important to note that this bill does not change the structure or composition of the State Board. Instead, it establishes the duties of the SBOE to include the implementation and enforcement of rules on teacher licensure and professional conduct of educators, and determinations regarding school district territory transfers. The Board can also make recommendations to the Director of the DEW regarding priorities, and will continue to appoint the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who will serve as both the Board’s secretary and an advisor to the Director. All other duties currently under the purview of the SBOE will be assigned to the appropriate new divisions at the Department.

SB 1 also includes protections for homeschooling families. The bill aims to guarantee homeschooling families the ability to home educate their child by exempting a child from compulsory school attendance when that child is receiving instruction in core subject areas from

³ [Ohio Department of Higher Education: Attainment](#)

their parents. It also codifies current rules regarding non-chartered nonpublic schools into Ohio Revised Code.

The bill also ensures necessary legislative checks over the Department of Education and Workforce. For example, the Director of DEW, and the deputy directors of the two divisions, must receive the advice and consent of the Senate, and cannot hold these offices, on a permanent or an interim basis, for more than 45 days without the Senate's advice and consent. In addition, SB 1 permits the General Assembly to invalidate or rescind any rules adopted by the Department.

Following hours of intensive discussions with education stakeholders, we made changes to the bill in the Senate Education Committee that incorporate public and expert input at the Department. A crucial addition is the inclusion of required stakeholder outreach and engagement in the rule-making process. This process must include the opportunity for stakeholder feedback prior to the Department initiating rulemaking and submitting a proposed rule to the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review. The process mirrors the Ohio EPA's stakeholder process, which I have seen work well in my own district. SB 1 also includes a public presentation requirement that requires the Director or his or her designee to convene a public meeting at least every other month. These meetings must include updates on any new or existing policies; changes to law that affect the Department; and rule updates. There must be opportunity for public discussion and access to audio recording of the meetings within five days of their conclusion.

Overall, Senate Bill 1 forces our state education system to be more accountable in how it oversees the education of our kids. It is glaringly obvious that the current structure is not adequately preparing the next generation of Ohioans for life-long success. It is time for us to refocus and reenergize education by creating a system that works for our children, who deserve our best efforts toward their ultimate success. Senate Bill 1 achieves this goal.

Chairman, thank you for your time. I welcome any questions from the committee.