



Vanguard-Sentinel

Career & Technology Centers

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**Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 1
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Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and Members of the Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Greg Edinger and I am the superintendent of Vanguard Sentinel Career and Technology Centers. Vanguard-Sentinel CTC is located in NW Ohio and we have facilities in Fremont and Tiffin. We serve over 1400+ high school students on campus, another 700+ students through satellite programs, and over 1000+ adult students. At Vanguard-Sentinel CTC we work in collaboration with our local business and industry partners and our 16 local school districts to develop ever-expanding academic and career opportunities for students. Because of these partnerships and our innovative programming, over the past year we have seen an increase in enrollment of over 400+ students taking advantage of career-tech programs in grades 9th – 12th. We have also expanded exploratory options for students in 1st – 8th grades.

We support SB1 and specifically the provisions that place a renewed and heightened emphasis on Career-Technical Education (CTE). Career-tech is extremely successful in Ohio at both the secondary and post-secondary level and our infrastructure is recognized as a model nationally. Career Centers are indeed one of the state's most valuable resources, and were originally built to be a major regional resource for workforce training. We serve high school and adult students of all ages with course offerings across dozens of different career fields—spanning hundreds of unique career and post-secondary options. And we are thankfully expanding and increasing our reach to meet the diverse and unique workforce demands of our rapidly evolving economy.

SB 1 restructures the Ohio Department of Education into the renamed Department of Education and Workforce (DEW). Recognizing the growth of our sector, the bill creates an independent Division of Career-Technical Education lead by a Deputy Director who serves on the Governor's Executive Workforce Board. The DEW's other Division of Primary and Secondary Education would similarly be led by a Deputy Director. These deputies would report to the DEW's overarching director, who would serve on the Governor's cabinet. This structure would enable swift and rapid as-needed change without having multiple layers of ODE personnel in the decision-making pipeline. It will make CTE more responsive to the demands of the business community and will ensure better alignment and communication with K-12, as well as ODHE and our higher education partners.

For context, note that under the current model, CTE is just another content area like English, Math, Science, Reading, Social Studies. Even after many years of emphasizing through existing channels our success, importance, and effectiveness, there has been minimal change coming from within (compared to the many improvements made working our work with the legislature and Governor over the years). Whereas we all know, career training can and should be infused in one way, shape, or form with all content areas and more highly emphasized. Currently the CTE pathway is looked at as an alternative pathway if you don't meet "regular" academic standards; in practice, this still causes our schools to be looked at as a "lesser than" option. You have the academic or "College Pathway" and you have career-tech. But the question of "College or Career" should never emerge because the

two should be treated equally. They can also co-exist and integrate: students who initially choose a career pathway can and often do go on to post-secondary education.

There is then the sheer bureaucracy. Many ODE-conceived policies created under the current structure do not necessarily assist our schools or students, and reflect changes we actually have opposed. To that end note the following:

- The current ODE process of establishing the approved industry credential list and assigning a value to each credential based on a 12-point valuation system. The problem is that this credential list has grown so big over the years that the system and associated point values have become convoluted. You may have a “12 point” credential on the list that can be earned online in two weeks with no hands-on training whatsoever. That credential is then equal to another credential that also awards 12 points, but takes 900 hours of hands on training to attain. This has led to students and schools chasing 12 points just for the sake of meeting a graduation requirement, thereby potentially diminishing the value of high-quality training.
- Other examples include Success Bound, CTE26 process, Federal Perkins, and EMIS. Success Bound, probably one of the biggest initiatives at SBOE/ODE in the last decade. While the premise was positive, the actual implementation did not include CTE schools!
- CTE 26 refers to the approval process for career technical programs through the Department of Education. Our schools (technically defined as “Career-Technical Planning Districts,” “CTPDs”) have approval authority over newly proposed CTE programs within their service area. If a proposed program would duplicate an existing nearby program, the CTPD can recommend denial and the state could avoid unnecessary cost and inefficient expenditures. But the training provider can then appeal to ODE, which has traditionally overturned our denials and allowed duplicate programs to proliferate without our collaboration.
- Also note the Federal Perkins program which offers grant funding to each state for CTE programming improvements. Since passage of the first Perkins law many years ago the Department has pursued several OH-specific policy changes that may not be necessary or universally supported by “the field” (our school administrators and educators). One change has been to the definition of a student CTE “concentrator.” The state previously defined “concentrator” as a student who made a commitment to their pathway training of choice for more than a two-course sequence. ODE has since redefined the term to mean a student who takes just two courses in a pathway. Watering down this definition de-emphasizes completion of full credential training programs and has skewed the data behind the success of career technical education.

Despite these issues, programming growth in our schools continues to take place with great results. SB 1 will recognize the success of CTE by reorganizing our state’s educational agency and making it more nimble and responsive to our voice. It will be a huge benefit just in terms of having a CTE leader at the table for these major decisions. This will lead to a more streamlined career and technical education that is focused on need and quality. The new department of CTE will provide a clearer focus and facilitate expansion “the right way” versus a potential watered-down version of workforce development

I also want to emphasize that in recent years there have been many positive improvements from a policy perspective, where career training has been brought to the forefront. But those changes have in part been driven by Executive action and the state legislature, which require the SBOE and ODE to adapt. (See, e.g., budget initiatives like the Innovative Workforce Incentive Program (IWIP), TechCred, and Funding for Short Term Certificates; SB 89 (2019-2020); SB 166 (2021); and SB 135 (2022)). Point being that the engagement with policymakers has resulted in effective and positive change. My state legislators regularly visit our campuses, attend our Business Advisory Council meetings, EDC meetings and events, etc. Many other discussions take place when requested. LG Husted and Governor DeWine have visited our campuses several times. In my experience this level of engagement simply does not exist at the state board or agency level.

There have been concerns that this new structure is a power grab and this change will drive our educational goals from an elected statewide board to a cabinet member appointed by the governor; i.e. it will do more harm than good. But all of our legislators including the Governor are also elected and accountable to taxpayers. And we will still have our local school boards that can and should drive policy specific to our districts. So I don't see how that accountability would change. I think SB 1 would simply create a more efficient system. Currently a law is passed, and it then goes to the SBOE/ODE for implementation and associated policy development. This process has a lot of steps and the intent of the law is often lost in transition. SB 1 eliminates the "middle man" and allows us to work directly with the decision makers so that change can occur more rapidly.

The bill sponsors and Senate Education Committee have amended the bill several times since it was initially introduced last year as SB178. There were concerns over non-educators being appointed to leadership positions. Legislators listened to that and job descriptions were created. There were concerns over too much power given to one person, again legislators listened and a process was put in place providing accountability and oversight, and input from stakeholders. The point being legislators have listened and amendments have been made based on stakeholder input.

Some concerns have been brought about that policies and leadership under this new department structure would change each time a new governor takes office. In my 15 years as a superintendent I have worked with 8 different state superintendents of public instruction. All with different ideas and priorities. That spans three different governors. So even if there is a change in leadership with the governor's office every 4 years that is still more of a focused priority and commitment than we have seen under the current structure.

In closing SB1 will place a well-rounded education as a focal point of importance for students to meet the demands of the real world. The proposed DEW would bring a positive change that gives Ohio the opportunity to step out of the current status quo; allows education to be more flexible, adaptive, and responsive to the constant flow of workforce changes statewide; and offers the opportunity to reorganize, refocus, and reimagine our education system.

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