



Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee
Hearing on Senate Bill 1
Proponent Testimony of Jon Graft, Superintendent, Butler Tech

March 28, 2023

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, my name is Jon Graft and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 1. I currently serve as the Superintendent of Butler Tech Joint Vocational School District. I have spent my thirty-year career in public education working as a teacher, athletic director, assistant principal, principal, Head Start director, and superintendent. I arrived in the world of education with the onset of computers in classrooms, the internet and used something called email technology in my first years as a teacher.

As with any experience in life, things change and we must learn to adapt as human beings. Change is neither good nor bad but rather inevitable and we must learn to cope and progress with it. However, I am saddened to see that many of the changes in education are incremental and would best be described as moving furniture on the Titanic. For most of my career, I have worked to go against the grain of the traditional assembly line model of education which became formalized at the end of the century; the end of the 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's. Yet, we continue to utilize the antiquated practices of seat time as learning time, batch students according to chronological age, and Carnegie Units.

According to the Carnegie Foundation, "The unit was developed in 1906 as a measure of the amount of time a student has studied a subject. For example, a total of 120 hours in one subject—meeting 4 or 5 times a week for 40 to 60 minutes, for 36 to 40 weeks each year—earns the student one "unit" of high school credit. Fourteen units were deemed to constitute the minimum amount of preparation that could be interpreted as "four years of academic or high school preparation."

This sounds like many schools in Ohio and frankly, across the nation. The current practice of general supervision of the system of public education in the state, including policy forming, evaluation functions and financials are all built on the Carnegie model. We have attempted to move the furniture on the Titanic but the technological glacier continues to be straight ahead of us.

There must be a sense of urgency on all of our parts to move the education system into the 21st century. We must be able to move faster than the speed of business in order to handle the tremendous amount of change occurring in our world. This is why we support SB 1, because it restructures the agency in charge of our education system—and elevates career-technical

education—in an effort to make government more responsive to the rapidly evolving economic and workforce climate across Ohio.

“Of the jobs that will exist in 2030, 85% have not been invented yet. The pace of change will be so rapid that people will learn “in the moment” using new technologies. The ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself.” (Dell Technologies Research Explores the Next Era of Human-Machine Partnerships. Dell 2018)

The revamped Department of Education and Workforce would oversee a Division of Career-Technical Education and a Division of Primary and Secondary Education, each with a deputy director serving on the Governor’s Executive Workforce Board. These deputies having a direct channel to our Governor will increase efficiencies within our system and eliminate a lot of red tape. This is important because we no longer have time for bureaucracy. As educators, we don’t have time peel back layers upon layers of work that has been done in the past. We have local school boards to provide a voice for our communities and stakeholders. We have practitioners across the state ready to mobilize efforts to renew our vision for public education in Ohio.

To be clear, I know several people who have served on the Ohio State Board of Education. They are good people attempting to do good work on behalf of Ohio’s children but they are working within a system that does not adapt well to the changes needed in today’s always developing and innovating world.

“Two things are happening at the same time – the velocity of technology is increasing exponentially and yet it has never been as slow as it is today; and secondly, the volume of knowledge being generated boggles the mind. Volume of knowledge is doubling every 12 hours, the doubling rate used to be 25 years in 1945. Speed with which technology is progressing is the driver which are upending our careers, transforming lives and disrupting economies.” (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/human-knowledge-doubling-every-12-hours-amitabh-ray/>).

I encourage you to support Senate Bill 1’s streamlining efforts to assist in creating an Ohio education system that is nimble and can move faster than the speed of business. I am more encouraged than I have ever been as an educator to see the needed changes so many educators like me have desired for over thirty years. I look forward to working with the Governor’s Office to see to it that all of our students in Ohio get the best education in the United States and across the world. Senate Bill 1 is the first step in this transformation.

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