

# Northwest Ohio Regional Education Partnership



## Testimony on H.B. 312 Ohio House Finance Committee Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Chair Edwards, Vice-Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. We appreciate this opportunity to offer testimony on the proposed regional partnership legislation.

I am Bob Savage, Founder and President of the NW Ohio Regional Education Partnership (a cradle to career backbone education support organization) and Toledo Tomorrow (a college and career access non-profit / community-based organization). I spent my prior career helping regional businesses grow. In 2018, I was inspired to assist our youth reach more of their potential and grow our workforce.

I have served on numerous boards and committees in our community, including a number of corporate boards, committees at the University of Toledo Medical Center, the Greater Toledo Community Foundation, Bowling Green State University, and the Rotary Club of Toledo - the world's 12th largest Rotary chapter.

Ohio's workforce shortage is a serious problem that continues to grow. It is also the largest deterrent to our faster economic growth. We have had decent growth, but we are losing projects to other states and countries that we don't need to miss. The regional educational partnerships or cradle to career organizations address these issues, as well as have long-term positive impacts on health, financial stability, our tax base, and workforce. These issues won't be adequately addressed without a better educated citizenry - and better preparation for in demand jobs. Many of our partnerships focus on high school, post-secondary work and employment - done in partnership with the good, large and small businesses in Ohio.

We operate in Wood, Lucas, Hancock, Allen, and Fulton counties. Currently, we believe we are moving into Ottawa, Henry or Defiance counties next school year. As Tom Lasley stated, these partnerships existed in far too few Ohio communities. This small investment will provide so many more families the opportunities to have higher quality education for their children. Families in all areas of Ohio - not just the larger cities.

The last very small regional education partnership investment in 11 communities spurred organizations and increased capacity in: Muskingum County (Zanesville), Rio Grande, Piqua, Circleville, Cambridge, Oxford, Summit County, Youngstown, and Carroll.

These partnership grants have also helped leverage money from other partners in all of our communities, and raise the awareness of what has been accomplished in our backyards and other more established organizations.

Private sector partnerships have also been improved, and continue to further expand. More of Ohio's good employers engage in work-based learning, in-demand industry sectors and participate in education and community programs. The increases we have generated in post-secondary activity have been meaningful. All regional community and four-year colleges have been involved with us since day one, and consider us valuable partners.

## Northwest Ohio Regional Education Partnership



We are here to bring collective impact from our communities, to be a voice for workforce preparation inside of our regions, and externally. Showing our youth the great opportunities that exist for them in Ohio is our mission, and helping them create a bridge to access those opportunities is what we do every day.

Our partnerships are formed with broad-based support. Business leaders such as Bob Baxter, Mercy Health's NW Ohio President, Dean Monske, President of NW Ohio's Jobs Ohio partner the Regional Growth Partnership, and Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce's CEO, Wendy Gramza are involved on our committees. Other partners include: The Andersons Corporation, KeyBank, Owens Corning, First Solar, and more. Presidents Dr. Rodney Rogers of Bowling Green State University, Dr. [Dione Somerville](#) of Owens Community College, Dr. Greg Postel of the University of Toledo, Dr. Bill Bissett of Lourdes University, and Dr. Susan Wajert of Mercy College of Ohio all sit on our Partnerships Advisory Committee. District superintendents Dr. Romulus Durant of Toledo Public Schools, and Dr. Kadee Anstadt of Washington Local Schools both also sit on the NWOREP Advisory Committee.

The future of our youth is important - and it is critical to Ohio's future. Their development has significant, direct impact on many items that this Committee deals with every year, including Ohio's tax base. Our families depend on and need this assistance. We want to make sure this work spreads to many more communities throughout Ohio. H.B. 312 will do just that.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincere Regards,

Bob Savage