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Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Hearing on House Bill 312 (Regional Partnerships Program)
Proponent - Testimony of The Ohio Workforce Association

November 24, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 312 - legislation that proposes the establishment of a Regional Partnerships Program. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Ohio Workforce Association (OWA) membership.

The OWA represents and offers support to 20 local Workforce Development Boards across Ohio. There are 245 local businesses represented across these Boards, as well as 28 Business Organizations and more than 40 labor representatives. The following are the largest business sectors that are represented on our Boards:

- 62 Manufacturing
- 31 Business Services
- 30 Financial Services
- 29 Healthcare
- 25 Construction and Skilled Trade Companies

Our workforce system utilizes OhioMeansJobs Centers in all 88 counties to assist both job-seekers and businesses. Through our Boards and these Centers, we are the state's "boots on the ground" in convening and connecting all things related to workforce development. This includes local workforce development board partnerships with K-12 and higher education. Workforce Boards are the expert source of labor market information on in demand occupations and growth industries for each of Ohio's economic regions. The boards' daily interaction with businesses sourcing talent informs a real time knowledge of career opportunities that should be shared with students.

Earlier sponsor testimony from Representative Andrea White and Representative Tom Young mentioned current partnerships and partnerships created and/or expanded with funds in 2022. Many of the local workforce boards have community awareness of/or are active partners with many of those existing regional partnerships. Local workforce boards and their OhioMeansJobs centers could assist to create more successful regional partnerships – for example – the workforce board serving Knox and Allen Counties has established partnerships with the local chambers of commerce to provide career exploration/navigator services in their respective K-12 school systems;

the workforce board serving Richland County is a partner in a K-12 business-led initiative that supports career awareness and industry-sector recognition with students.

Ohio's local workforce boards recognize the importance to capture and retain young talent and connect that talent with local businesses. The local workforce boards and their OhioMeansJobs Centers are in a unique position through already-established best practices and existing community/education partnerships to acquaint K-12 students with workforce services available to them. For students who are Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or Temporary Assistant For Needy Families-eligible, this includes post-secondary education and short-term credential training, as well as work-based learning opportunities and assistance with direct job placement. Successful partnerships can bring together local businesses, community-based organizations and higher education providers to better coordinate services for students, both in and out-of-school.

Thank you for considering this important legislation and recognizing the importance of the career development needs of Ohio's talent. OWA would be happy to address any questions at the committee's convenience, and to serve as a resource for any considerations that are workforce-related in the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer M. Meek Eells". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Jennifer M. Meek Eells, Executive Director
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