

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

House Bill 432

Proponent Testimony from Matt Sheridan, Superintendent,
Mid-East Career and Technology Centers

April 23, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. I am Matt Sheridan, the Superintendent of the Mid-East Career and Technology Centers (MECTC). Thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer proponent written testimony about the positive impact HB 432 will have on my district.

The high school portion of our district primarily serves juniors and seniors from 13 partner school districts spanned across three and a half counties (Muskingum, Guernsey, Noble, and Perry counties) in Southeast Ohio. Enrollment at our two campuses has increased steadily since the pandemic and now sits at a combined 1,125 students. Although the population of Appalachia and enrollment in our K-12 districts continues to decline, our enrollment at METEC continues to climb. On average, one third of the juniors and seniors from our partner schools are enrolled at MECTC. We provide 33 programs to high school students with only our Welding and Multi-Skilled Health Technologies programs being offered on both campuses.

During my four-year tenure as superintendent at METEC, we have started two new programs (Exercise Science & Sports Medicine and Large Animal Science & Agriculture). Next year we plan to begin a new agriculture satellite program at one of our partner schools. We will also offer a first of its kind, senior-only credential for 10-12 students from each of our partner schools to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). We have faced an aging population of career-technical teachers and have seen about a quarter of our career-technical teachers retire since I became superintendent here. I expect another quarter to retire within the next five years.

HB 432 is critical to the continued success of METEC. It will provide the district much needed flexibility in obtaining the best teachers possible to both replace our retiring teachers and to attract new people to the profession to help fill positions as we continue to expand our programming and opportunities for students. There is a teacher shortage across the state, and nowhere is that more evident than in rural Appalachia. METEC is fortunate to offer the highest teacher salaries in the area to attract quality teaching candidates; however, we still need more flexibility to find the right, experienced people to teach our career-technical courses. An increased industry demand for skilled-trade workers, coupled with a decrease in population in the area, makes it difficult to find qualified teaching candidates. HB 432 would provide relief to career and technology centers by offering some flexibility in teacher licensure for experienced trade professionals looking to enter the teaching profession.

Career-technical education continues to grow in popularity with the general public, employers, legislators, and the state as a whole. As enrollment continues to increase at career and technology centers, there will continue to be an increased need for quality teachers. Simply put, the passage of HB 432 will help us address this need.