

February 7, 2023

Re: SB 1

Members of the Senate Education Committee:

ACT is here to state our support to provisions in SB 1, Section 3313.6020 which requires DEW to develop and make available informational materials for seventh and eighth grade students regarding career opportunities available to them, including in-demand Ohio jobs. The materials also must address how a career-technical education may help those students satisfy Ohio's high school graduation requirements.

It may come as a surprise to some members of this Committee that ACT would provide testimony in support of provisions related to career readiness. We are primarily known as the non-profit that has provided the ACT college readiness assessment for over 60 years. To be fair, we did name the company after the product. But what might be less known is that ACT as a company has been measuring and certifying career readiness for over 30 years. ACT WorkKeys assessments measure the foundational skills necessary to succeed in any career path or career training program and are designed to align to specific employer needs. Combined with 100% aligned curriculum and a nationally recognized career readiness credential, the system can assess, build, and document the skills to certify that an individual is ready for success in any job throughout the economy.

ACT certifies foundational career readiness for students and adults in over 22 states as part of career exploration programs, graduation requirements, federal accountability, employment training, and re-entry programs. We have issued over 5 million ACT National Career Readiness Certificates, the most recognized credential of foundational skills in the country. ACT's NCRC (as it is commonly known) is recognized by over 20,000 employers nationwide, and the aggregate data from the employer skill requirements is leveraged to provide career readiness data that is tied to labor market information for students and adults. Aggregate NCRC data is also utilized by states and communities for site selection and economic development. Our company understands the power of data to inform student choices. That is why we are here today.

ACT supports efforts that provide career awareness activities beginning earlier in a student's education. Specifically, ensuring that middle school students have the opportunity to enroll in courses that seek to familiarize students with potential career pathways to keep students engaged with their learning and help them begin to formulate a plan for their future. ACT understands that education consists of much more than just academic learning and has positioned our research around the understanding that many dimensions of readiness, including career navigation, empowers people to achieve both education and career success.

It is our hope that introductory or exploratory CTE courses that seek to familiarize students with industries, careers, and available credentials will not be overshadowed by other priorities such as core academic courses and are offered consistently across the state school system. Students in Ohio need greater exposure to CTE courses earlier in order to capitalize on this important moment in their educational pathway. It should therefore be our aim to ensure that middle school students have the opportunity to enroll in introductory or exploratory CTE courses that seek to familiarize students with potential CTE pathways to keep students engaged with their learning and help them begin to formulate a plan for their future.

Career exploration is more than just exposure and interest. Labor market information tied with data on the foundational skills needed for entry into careers enables students to make more informed decisions about their next step after high school. Foundational career readiness skills data can, for example, let a student know that higher levels of math are in fact very important for careers in the trades and can reinforce the relevance of the material they are learning in the classroom.

ACT also supports the provisions in SB 1, Section 6301.11, 6301.111, and 6301.112 which requires DEW to participate in the process established under continuing law to identify and publicize in-demand jobs as well as Section 6301.04 which requires the Governor to appoint the Deputy Director of Primary and Secondary Education and the Deputy Director of Career-Technical Education to the Governor's Executive Workforce Board.

Oftentimes, educators and employers speak different languages in terms of what is needed to prepare students for career success. ACT supports state workforce board structures that acknowledge the importance of aligning and more deeply integrating efforts across the education and workforce sectors. Even more importantly, we support more close integration of education and workforce activities to define and communicate what in-demand careers and work based learning activities are available to students in Ohio. ACT's mission of *helping people achieve education and workplace success* is reflective of how deeply we believe in better alignment of education and workforce policy in order to meaningfully improve individual career paths.

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