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March 7, 2023

*Ohio House Primary and
Secondary Education Committee
Proponent Testimony for HB 12*

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

My name is Keith Horner and I am the superintendent of Apollo Career Center in Lima, Ohio. This is my 33rd year in education and my 18th year as a superintendent. Of those 18 years, 13 were as superintendent of Wapakoneta City Schools, a traditional K-12 school. The last five years I have been the superintendent of Apollo Career Center. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a proponent of House Bill 12. There are 5 primary reasons why I believe this is good for students and for the economy of Ohio.

1. Deputy Director for Career Technical Education. A deputy director who understands and is dedicated to CTE would ensure that it expands in an efficient and effective way to benefit students, Ohio businesses and the economy in general.
2. Student Success. Career technical education (CTE) has had significant success in preparing students for careers and for having impactful lives after high school. A separate division would also allow for more strategic planning to expose younger students, especially 7th and 8th graders, to in-demand careers that will be available to them in the future in a more systematic manner.
3. Equality. Under the current Ohio Department of Education (ODE) structure, career centers have often been overlooked and bypassed in developing new programs and meeting workforce demands. This continues to dilute the delivery of effective educational outcomes. We live in a career tech world and the traditional K-12 educational model that views CTE as a lesser path is outdated. The new structure will raise CTE to the level of an equal companion to traditional K-12 educational delivery systems.
4. Bureaucratic Overreach. While ODE works hard to implement the laws of Ohio and the federal government, there have been, in my opinion, instances of bureaucratic overreach. An example is the current Office of Career Technical Education essentially forcing career centers to develop a lottery system for enrollment purposes. CTE's focus should be a combination of education and workforce development to strengthen Ohio's economy and not on non-legislative concerns or inaccurate attempts to interpret existing law. Forcing an enrollment lottery system is not good for employers or Ohio's economy.

5. Workforce Development. The workforce crisis in Ohio is obvious and there is no end to the demand for employees in the foreseeable future. Career centers in Ohio were built to be a major regional resource for workforce training. Under the current ODE structure, career centers have often been overlooked and bypassed as a major resource in developing new programs and meeting workforce needs. A division focused solely on CTE would allow for more flexibility and to be more responsive to meet workforce demands instead of being bogged down by K-12 initiatives that do not pertain to CTE. There are currently too many layers in ODE to navigate to make changes efficiently and effectively to meet workforce demands. In the current model, CTE is just one of many things to do as opposed to being a focus. CTE should be a relevant and quality product that is delivered effectively and efficiently to students.

The above items provide firm rationale for why this new Ohio educational structure would be effective and beneficial for Ohio's economy, workforce development and, most importantly, Ohio's students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Horner", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keith Horner
Superintendent