

**May 26, 2021**

**Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Hearing on Senate Bill 135  
Proponent Testimony of Brian Bontempo, Superintendent  
Auburn Career Center**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today in support of substitute Senate Bill 135 and in particular, its proposed Second Chance Voucher Program. Substitute SB 135 proposes to fund vouchers for adult students who disenrolled from a state university (but did not graduate), for use in reducing the cost of tuition necessary to enroll in a qualifying college or technical school (including an Ohio Technical Center)—so that the student can (at a minimum) receive technical training and education necessary to enter the workforce. We support this concept as it would make career-technical education more affordable for many adult students.

**This is what Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs) do, why we are important, and why we can help those students who need a second chance in higher education to find a career they love:**

In Northeast Ohio, employers need more machinists, more welders, more practical nurses, more HVAC technicians, more Firefighters and EMTs, more Electrical workers and industrial maintenance technicians, more EKG technicians, more dental assistants, and more Paramedics. Training at an OTC like Auburn Career Center gets adults into these critical jobs fast. Certificated and trained individuals make a living wage quickly and can better support their families. Businesses fight over our students and compete with one another for internships, co-ops, and other work-based learning opportunities that will fill both their short and long term job needs.

At Auburn Career Center, we had 70 local employers participate in the virtual job fair for our students earlier this month. We have over 3,000 company representatives who consistently stay connected to us on our job board. We partner with over 500 companies annually in 23 career fields and offer 50+ adult classes and programs in our OTC. Companies recruit students from our programs before the students even complete them. The companies even pay people to work for them and at the same time take our classes and/or provide tuition reimbursement.

In short, OTCs serve a critical workforce need; we are able to respond to workforce demands quickly because we employ a nimble and flexible model designed to rapidly fill local job openings. FWe also offer education for these critical jobs at a reasonable price: students

can take a class for \$6,000-8,000 and in 9 months start earning enough money to support their family.

And we never leave out the rigor. Classes are hard, some college level. A few examples of courses Auburn Career Center offers include Trigonometry, anatomy and physiology, programmable logic controls, AC/DC electrical components, geriatrics and metallurgy. We have students who come to Auburn for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training, and continue on with Firefighter 1 & 2—ultimately concluding with our Paramedic program. They move up the ladder economically and stay in the community serving the residents of Lake and Geauga counties. In other words, students who are educated here at Auburn Career Center find a job locally and stay locally.

We would welcome the chance to serve even more students in the NE Ohio area and we believe SB 135 provides us with just that opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

Brian Bontempo, Superintendent  
Auburn Career Center