



**Governor's Office of  
Workforce Transformation**

**Proponent Testimony for House Bill 472, Mid-Biennium Review**

**Ohio House Ways and Means Committee**

**March 12, 2014**

Chairman McClain, members of the House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Tracy Intihar, Director of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the workforce development policies in the Mid-Biennium Review (MBR), House Bill 472 (HB 472).

Growing jobs and Ohio's economy drives almost every policy decision and reform priority in Governor John Kasich's Administration. Creating a unified workforce system to meet the needs of business' in finding the workers they need becomes a top priority in our work to grow jobs.

Our office is committed to improving our workforce development system. Since our office was created in 2012, we have worked with our partner agencies to:

- Identify and summarize Ohio's in-demand jobs
- Build exciting enhancements to OhioMeansJobs.com to allow people of all ages to explore careers and create a plan for their future
- Prioritize veterans as a ready workforce
- Provide tools and professional development in our schools to show students career pathways
- Provide training dollars to Ohio's incumbent workforce

We are pleased to propose new reforms in HB 472 to advance our work to ensure that Ohio's workforce development system is fully focused on the needs of Ohio's businesses and, ultimately, our workers.

## **Aligning Ohio's Workforce Development System**

The MBR includes three important provisions to better improve our workforce system and better align our programs to meet Ohio's workforce needs.

### **Integrated State Workforce Plan**

Ohio's workforce training system is frequently criticized for being complicated, duplicative and misaligned. Today, the state's three most significant workforce programs submit individual state plans, the plan guiding the programs basic functions, to the federal government. Ohio perpetuates this misaligned system by writing and submitting individual state plans for our largest workforce programs.

A single state workforce plan will create better opportunities for cooperation, alignment and coordination between our three most significant workforce programs – Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE), Carl Perkins career technical programs and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). This coordination will ensure job seekers move through Ohio's workforce support and training programs seamlessly. The programs would work together on shared goals and outcomes that would take critical steps forward in creating a unified workforce system. With clear and coordinated changes defined in a single state plan, Ohio will improve the quality of our most significant workforce programs by eliminating duplication and ensuring a clear focus and goals for each program.

Specific outcomes of the integrated state plan include:

- A single state workforce plan will allow for better coordination between our three main workforce programs – ABLE, Perkins and WIA. This coordination will ensure job seekers move through Ohio's workforce support and training programs seamlessly.
- Through a basic set of workforce success measures, Ohio will have an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of our programs simply and effectively. The integrated plan will require the programs to measure and the state to report clearly the programs' effectiveness in connecting people to employment, short- and long-term, increasing an individual's earnings and a job seeker's access to an industry-recognized credential and business engagement.
- With clear and coordinated changes in a single state plan, Ohio will improve the quality of our most significant workforce programs by eliminating duplication and ensuring a clear focus and goals for each program.

With your support, the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation will work with the Board of Regents, the Department of Education and the Department of Job and Family Services to write one integrated state plan to submit to the federal government by the end of the 2014. The integrated state plan would be targeted to take effect July 2015.

### **Workforce Success Measures**

Many programs collect important data to evaluate their performance. However, the data is not consistent across all programs. It is also difficult to access in a simple, clear, aggregated way. Ohio has the opportunity to reform and improve its workforce system but lacks a uniform reporting system for the workforce development programs run by different agencies and localities. One important data set that is not currently collected, but needs to be included, by our workforce programs is business engagement data. Are businesses being served by our programs?

Without simple, clear workforce metrics for our programs, we are missing an opportunity to track, evaluate and improve our workforce programs. Without this important change the programs will continue to operate within silos with no clear understanding if the dollars put into the workforce system are actually benefiting the job seeker and business.

Establishing clear, simple and consistent performance metrics for Ohio's four largest workforce programs is an important goal for our workforce transformation efforts and is a priority of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board, the advisory board for the Office of Workforce Transformation. The board is comprised of twenty-five people, the vast majority business leaders, but also includes workforce and education leaders. The Board plays a critical role in providing a "reality check" to our work and focus.

Our work to establish clear performance metrics and a dashboard will create an opportunity to evaluate our workforce programs to determine what is working and what is not in our workforce system.

### **Inventory of Education Programs**

Ohio has never had a thorough inventory of our education and training programs. To tackle the workforce supply/demand question in areas of critical workforce needs, Ohio needs to develop a tool to show the supply side of the equation. Much work has been invested in 2013 to identify and understand the demand side of the equation -- what are Ohio's most urgent workforce needs. The Ohio Board of Regents is currently building the inventory of education and training programs.

For the first time we will have a complete list of the training programs, the length of training, credentials offered and the programs capacity. The value of having a list of the in-demand jobs as identified by the state and the ability to search for education and training programs statewide or by region that correlate to the in-demand jobs will be invaluable to our youth, students, displaced workers and the unemployed to make informed career decisions. All of this information will be available on OhioMeansJobs, the state's central employment tool.

Including this requirement in law enhances the state's ability to maintain a thorough inventory of the education and training programs and collect the necessary data to provide information about education capacity in specific areas and programs.

### **Veterans**

As veterans leave military service and rejoin civilian life, they are well-prepared by their military training and experience to strengthen Ohio's workforce and claim their piece of the America Dream. Too often, obstacles and red tape make that transition difficult. In their job search or pursuit of a college degree, these barriers keep veterans from receiving the full benefits and priority they deserve. Gov. Kasich charged the Office of Workforce Transformation, the Board of Regents and the Department of Veterans Services to review these challenges and to make recommendations for improving how the state gives credit for military experience and training for occupational licenses and college credit. HB 472 includes recommendations that tackle these obstacles head on and give our veterans the full respect and priority their service has earned them.

### **Making Sure Ohio Military Service Members and Veterans Get Credit for the Military Experience Earned for Occupational Licenses:**

For Ohio military service members and veterans who want to work toward earning one of the state's 43 professional licenses or certificates after their service, there has been no uniform system to best serve veterans' particular needs. For example, service members and veterans find it difficult – if not impossible – to get credit for the military training and education they received during their service when applying for professional license or certificates. We are recommending a provision be added to law that requires professional licensing boards to clarify their rules and laws to award applicants' credit for relevant military experience.

### **GI Bill Benefit**

Only a small number of boards and commissions have registered their tests with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to allow a veteran to obtain reimbursement through the GI Benefit. Veterans are missing an opportunity to use their benefit for many Ohio licenses and certifications.

All state departments, boards and commissions with regulatory authority of occupational licenses will be required to apply for GI Bill eligibility, ensuring that their testing fees to receive licenses and certificates are covered by the GI Bill benefit. Veterans will then be able to use the GI Bill dollars they earned by their service to pay for national or state occupational license and certificate testing fees that will enable them to get a job after leaving the military.

### **Establishing a Process to Expedite and Prioritize Service Members, Veterans and Their Spouses**

All state departments, boards and commissions with regulatory authority of occupational licenses will establish a process to expedite and prioritize licensing and certification for veterans and their spouses. With such a process in place, Ohio will provide a worthwhile benefit to those who have served our country as a member of the military while prioritizing veterans as a ready-workforce and a valuable resource to employers.

### **Standardize Military Definitions**

Currently, Ohio has conflicting definitions in Ohio Revised Code that create confusion and offer different programs and benefits to different service members and veterans. Additionally, many service men and women do not consider themselves a veteran if they have not served on active duty or overseas. If definitions remain limited and inconsistent, Ohio will miss the opportunity to provide priority to service members, veterans and their spouses.

Providing a consistent and broad definition of *veteran* will allow the State of Ohio to treat all veterans equally and provide priority of service to the broadest possible definition of *veteran*. All state departments, boards and commissions will standardize the definition of *armed forces*, *service member* and *veteran* as it applies in state law specifically for issuing occupational licenses and will be required to add demographic questions to their application to properly identify these individuals.

### **Increasing the Department of Veterans Services Workforce Development Role**

While the Department of Veterans Services plays a critical role in supporting and assisting veterans and their families, the department has an opportunity to increase outreach and marketing efforts to service members, veterans and their spouses as well as improve the support and assistance offered to boards and commissions in their work to give credit for military experience for occupational licenses. Without this provision, Ohio risks missing opportunities to better serve and communicate to transitioning service members, veterans and their spouses.

The Ohio Department of Veteran Services will create a centralized website that provides state occupational licensing information, produce and distribute information to all boards and commissions on updated law and rules relating to veterans, create documentation to assist boards and commissions in their work to translate military experience for credit for occupational licenses, and coordinate interagency outreach to ensure veterans and their families are aware of job and education benefits.

### **Awarding Veterans College Credit for Their Military Training and Experience**

Veterans who work toward a college degree deserve credit for the military training, experience and coursework they've received in the service. While some of our colleges and universities do this well, Ohio has lacked a uniform and effective process for awarding that credit.

We are offering recommendations in this proposal to address these challenges by requiring Ohio's higher education system to develop a set of standards and procedures for granting college credit for military experience.

Changes proposed in the MBR will ensure that no veteran is ever asked to pay for the evaluation, transcription and application of college credit for military experience or training credits he or she is awarded.

In the event that a veteran would ever need to question a decision regarding military-training credit, an additional MBR proposal would establish a veterans-specific appeals process regarding the award of such credits.

Veterans and active military members will be provided priority course registration at our public institutions ensuring they have access to the classes they need to succeed and thrive in civilian life.

When reentering civilian life as a college student, veterans often struggle to learn their options and the many opportunities available on a college campus. The MBR proposes that every college campus will have a dedicated office and counselors to support transitioning veterans.

### **Conclusion**

While Ohio's system for workforce development has seen much improvement, we have more to do to continue to better connect Ohio's unemployed, underemployed and incumbent workforce with the job training and tools they need to compete for today's in-demand jobs. Gov. Kasich's proposed reforms ensure that Ohio's workforce development system is fully focused on the needs of Ohio's businesses and workers.

Chairman McClain and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you very much for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Office of Workforce Transformation. I will be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.