



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Patricia Frost-Brooks, President
William Leibensperger, Vice President
Tim Myers, Secretary-Treasurer
Larry E. Wicks, Executive Director

The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

Ohio Education Association – State Council of Professional Educators

House Bill 59 Testimony: House Finance –Transportation Subcommittee

March 13, 2013

Chair McGregor and Ranking Member Reese, on behalf of the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE), a unit within the Ohio Education Association's (OEA) approximately 121,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 59. My name is Matthew Dotson, with the OEA Government Relations staff. With me is Todd Dygert, an Education Specialist at Pickaway Correctional Institution and SCOPE Legislative Liaison. OEA/SCOPE membership consists of teachers and other educators employed by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), Department of Youth Services (DYS), Ohio School for the Blind (OSFB), Ohio School for the Deaf (OSFD) and the State Library (SL). Subcommittee testimony for DRC and DYS has been assigned to this committee. Our testimony focusses on issues impacting correctional institution educators and student-inmates in DRC & DYS.

The dedicated professional educators in DRC and DYS have a wealth of experience and training in providing a broad range of education, job training and life-skill services to correctional institution inmates. DRC and DYS each run their own school district under a charter from the Ohio Department of Education. The DRC school district is called the Ohio Central School System and the DYS school district is called Buckeye United Schools.

In DRC, education services provided by OEA/SCOPE educators also include Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE), General Education Development (GED), a high school diploma program, apprenticeship training, library services, special education, vocational education, re-entry programs and the Short Term Offender Education Collaborative (designed to target offenders serving 90 days or less in prison with an intensive educational opportunity that includes GED preparation and workplace skills). Extensive character development and life-skills instruction are also provided, including training on resume preparation, money management and consumerism.

In DYS, education services provided by OEA/SCOPE members include instruction towards a high school diploma or GED. With a large student population receiving special education, various services are provided for youth with learning disabilities. In addition to these education services and related library services, numerous programs are offered that develop job-training skills, many of which provide entry-level job certificates.

In both DRC and DYS, OEA/SCOPE educators have demonstrated a long-term professional commitment to the challenge of empowering inmates through the aforementioned education, job training and life-skills services. With regard to House Bill 59, OEA/SCOPE would like to comment on the



following provisions in terms of the impact, or potential impact, on DRC and DYS educators and the students they serve:

Funding for DRC and DYS Education/Job Training/Life-Skills Programs: OEA/SCOPE educators urge the maintenance of funding, as currently proposed in House Bill 59, for line items supporting the delivery of education, job training and life-skills services in DRC and DYS, (e.g. “Institutional Education Services” and “Education Services”). The proposed funding in House Bill 59 is expected to maintain the inmate services provided by the existing staff of highly-trained and experienced educators serving the inmate population at DRC and DYS.

This investment in a broad range of education, job training and life-skills services provided to inmates by educators in DRC and DYS helps to habilitate and rehabilitate these individuals for a productive return to society. When inmates are given the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills, they are less likely to become repeat offenders. For example, as noted in DRC Director Mohr’s testimony before this committee, DRC’s latest research data reflects that Ohio’s recidivism rate continues to drop, now standing at an all-time low of 28.7%, which is significantly below the national average of 43%. The variety of high-quality services provided by OEA/SCOPE correctional institution educators has played a significant and critical role in this success. Ohio’s continued investment in services that help lower recidivism rates serves the well-being of all Ohio communities by increasing the safety of life and property, as well as reducing the high cost to taxpayers of incarcerating offenders.

To address a specific funding issue, it is our understanding that the cost of taking the GED exam is being increased from \$40 to \$120 per inmate as part of the shift to computer based testing. As this cost is historically paid by DRC or DYS, OEA/SCOPE seeks to ensure that such a significant increase in the cost per student-inmate of taking the GED exam is reflected in the DRC and DYS budgets, as reflected in House Bill 59. The interest of OEA/SCOPE educators is in avoiding any undue delay or reduced opportunity for a student-inmate to take the GED as soon as they are ready. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the median earnings in 2010 for young adults without a high school diploma or its equivalent was \$21,000, while the median earnings for those with one of these education credentials was \$29,900.

Creation of the DRC Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board: The bill creates the Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board to advise and assist DRC with the creation of training programs and jobs for inmates and releasees through partnerships with private sector businesses.

Amongst the various duties assigned to the Advisory Board is the task of soliciting business proposals offering job training, apprenticeships, education programs, and employment opportunities for inmates and releasees. OEA/SCOPE believes that the framework and philosophy of any such effort should be to supplement, not supplant, existing services. OEA/SCOPE strongly opposes the outsourcing of such inmate services already provided within a DRC institution by SCOPE educators (or that are most appropriately provided by SCOPE educators based on training and expertise). Not only are these educators highly-experienced in providing high quality education services in some of the most difficult instructional environments, they have intensive safety and security training in how to handle the ever-present potential for conflict and physical danger in a correctional institution. However, to the extent the solicitations by the Advisory Board are for services to be provided to releasees outside an institution, or to better coordinate existing services to releasees, OEA/SCOPE believes this could be worthwhile as

part of ongoing efforts to maximize productive re-engagement with society and minimize recidivism by releasees.

In closing, OEA/SCOPE stands ready as a partner in efforts to continually strengthen and expand the education, job training and life-skill services provided by these professional educators within DRC and DYS. We thank the committee for its work on these important issues and for the opportunity to comment on some of the provisions in House Bill 59 as they pertain to correctional institution educators and student-inmates. We are available for any questions the committee may have.



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Patricia Frost-Brooks, President
William Leibensperger, Vice President
Tim Myers, Secretary-Treasurer
Larry E. Wicks, Executive Director

The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

Ohio Education Association - State Council of Professional Educators (OEA/SCOPE)

Correctional Institution Educators in DRC and DYS

House Bill 59 Testimony: Senate Finance Education Subcommittee

May 15, 2013

Chair Gardner, Ranking Member Turner and members of the committee; on behalf of the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE), a unit within the Ohio Education Association's (OEA) approximately 121,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 59 provisions impacting education services in state correctional institutions. My name is Robert Davis, with the OEA Government Relations staff. With me is Todd Dygert, an Education Specialist at Pickaway Correctional Institution and SCOPE Legislative Liaison. OEA/SCOPE membership consists of teachers and other educators employed by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), Department of Youth Services (DYS), Ohio School for the Blind (OSFB), Ohio School for the Deaf (OSFD) and the State Library (SL). Subcommittee testimony for education services in DRC and DYS has been assigned to this committee. Our testimony today focusses on issues impacting correctional institution educators and student-inmates in DRC & DYS institutions.

Background on the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE)

The dedicated professional educators in DRC and DYS have a wealth of experience and training in providing a broad range of education, job training and life-skill services to correctional institution inmates. DRC and DYS each run their own school district under a charter from the Ohio Department of Education. The DRC school district is called the Ohio Central School System and the DYS school district is called Buckeye United Schools.

In DRC, education services provided by OEA/SCOPE educators also include Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE), General Education Development (GED), a high school diploma program, apprenticeship training, library services, special education, vocational education, re-entry programs and the Short Term Offender Education Collaborative (designed to target offenders serving 90 days or less in prison with an intensive educational opportunity that includes GED preparation and workplace skills). Extensive character development and life-skills instruction are also provided, including training on resume preparation, money management and consumerism.

In DYS, education services provided by OEA/SCOPE members include instruction towards a high school diploma or GED. With a large student population receiving special education, various services are provided for youth with learning disabilities. In addition to these education services and related



library services, numerous programs are offered that develop job-training skills, many of which provide entry-level job certificates.

In both DRC and DYS, OEA/SCOPE educators have demonstrated a long-term professional commitment to the challenge of empowering inmates through the aforementioned education, job training and life-skills services. With regard to House Bill 59, OEA/SCOPE would like to comment on the following provisions in terms of the impact, or potential impact, on DRC and DYS educators and the students they serve:

HB 59 Funding for DRC and DYS Education/Job Training/Life-Skills Programs: OEA/SCOPE educators urge the maintenance of funding, as currently proposed in House Bill 59, for line items supporting the delivery of education, job training and life-skills services in DRC and DYS, (e.g. “Institutional Education Services” and “Education Services”). The proposed funding in House Bill 59 is expected to maintain the inmate services provided by the existing staff of highly-trained and experienced educators serving the inmate population at DRC and DYS.

This investment in a broad range of education, job training and life-skills services provided to inmates by educators in DRC and DYS helps to habilitate and rehabilitate these individuals for a productive return to society. When inmates are given the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills, they are less likely to become repeat offenders. For example, as noted in DRC Director Mohr’s testimony before this committee, DRC’s latest research data reflects that Ohio’s recidivism rate continues to drop, now standing at an all-time low of 28.7%, which is significantly below the national average of 43%. The variety of high-quality services provided by OEA/SCOPE correctional institution educators has played a significant and critical role in this success. Ohio’s continued investment in services that help lower recidivism rates serves the well-being of all Ohio communities by increasing the safety of life and property, as well as reducing the high cost to taxpayers of incarcerating offenders.

Cost of GED Exams Expected to Triple: The cost of taking the GED exam is expected to triple in the next year, from \$40 to \$120 per inmate, as part of the shift to computer based testing. As this cost is historically paid by DRC or DYS, OEA/SCOPE seeks to ensure that such a significant increase in the cost per student-inmate of taking the GED exam is reflected in the DRC and DYS budgets.

OEA/SCOPE recommends a review of funding sources for GED examinations to ensure that the significant cost increase does not cause undue delay or a reduction in opportunities for a student-inmate to take and pass the GED exam as soon as they are ready. Expanding the number of inmates earning a GED is critical and serves the overall interests of Ohio. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the median earnings in 2010 for young adults without a high school diploma or GED was \$21,000, while the median earnings for those with one of these education credentials was \$29,900.

Creation of the DRC Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board: The bill creates the Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board to advise and assist DRC with the creation of training programs and jobs for inmates and releasees through partnerships with private sector businesses.

Amongst the various duties assigned to the Advisory Board is the task of soliciting business proposals offering job training, apprenticeships, education programs, and employment opportunities for inmates and releasees. OEA/SCOPE believes that the framework and philosophy of any such effort should be to

supplement, not supplant or duplicate, existing services. OEA/SCOPE strongly opposes the outsourcing of such inmate services already provided within a DRC institution by SCOPE educators (or that are most appropriately provided by SCOPE educators based on training and expertise). OEA/SCOPE recommends clarifying language in this regard as it pertains to the Advisory Board's assigned duties.

Not only are SCOPE educators highly-experienced in providing high quality education services in some of the most difficult instructional environments, they have intensive safety and security training in how to handle the ever-present potential for conflict and physical danger in a correctional institution. However, to the extent the solicitations by the Advisory Board are for services to be provided to releasees outside an institution, or to better coordinate existing services to releasees, OEA/SCOPE believes this could be worthwhile as part of ongoing efforts to maximize productive re-engagement with society and minimize recidivism by releasees.

Increased Penalty for Institutional Assault of a DRC or DYS Employee: The Ohio House added a provision to HB 59 that increases the penalty for the assault of an employee of DRC or DYS by an inmate to a third degree felony (currently a fifth degree felony). OEA/SCOPE supports the increased penalty for an inmate that assaults a DRC or DYS employee, which will encourage safer and more effective classroom learning environments.

In closing, OEA/SCOPE stands ready as a partner in efforts to continually strengthen and expand the education, job training and life-skill services provided by these professional educators within DRC and DYS. We thank the committee for its work on these important issues and for the opportunity to comment on some of the provisions in House Bill 59 as they pertain to correctional institution educators and student-inmates. We are available for any questions the committee may have.

Ohio Education Association - State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE)

Amendment Request – HB 59 (As Passed by House)

Background on State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE): OEA membership includes teachers and other educators employed by the DRC and DYS. These educators work in Ohio's state correctional institutions and are a part of a unit within the OEA called the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE). The dedicated professional educators in DRC and DYS have a wealth of experience and training in providing a broad range of education, job training and life-skill services to correctional institution inmates.

Potential Privatization Issue: HB 59 creates the Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board to advise and assist DRC with the creation of training programs and jobs for inmates and releasees through partnerships with private sector businesses. Amongst the various duties assigned to the Advisory Board is the task of soliciting business proposals offering job training, apprenticeships, education programs, and employment opportunities for inmates and releasees.

Amendment requested: Require that business proposals solicited by the DRC Office of Enterprise Development Advisory Board (created by HB 59) for job training, apprenticeships, education programs, and employment opportunities for inmates and releasees to **supplement, not supplant or duplicate**, the same or similar services provided by department employees.

Proposed amendment language (in bold), based on HB 59 (As Passed by the House):

Sec. 5145.162(D)(1) – lines 91596 thru 91598

(1) Solicit business proposals offering **supplemental** job training, apprenticeship, education programs, and employment opportunities for inmates and releasees; **The advisory board shall not solicit proposals for inmate services that supplant or duplicate the same or similar services provided by, or that have previously been provided by, department employees;**

Rationale: OEA/SCOPE strongly opposes the outsourcing of inmate services already provided within a DRC institution by SCOPE educators (or services that have been previously provided, or are most appropriately provided, by SCOPE educators). These educators are highly-experienced in providing high quality education services in some of the most difficult instructional environments. In addition, they have intensive and on-going safety and security training in how to handle the ever-present potential for conflict and physical danger in a correctional institution.

This amendment will help ensure that the state's long-term investment in this core of educators is maintained. The efforts of these educators have helped minimize recidivism and maximize the productive re-engagement of releasees with society. DRC's latest data reflects that Ohio's recidivism rate continues to drop, now standing at an all-time low of 28.7%, which is significantly below the national average of 43%. OEA/SCOPE stands ready as a partner in efforts to continually strengthen and expand the education, job training and life-skill services provided by these professional educators within DRC and DYS.