



Representative Niraj Antani
42nd House District

Sponsor Testimony House Bill 429
Economic and Workforce Development Committee
January 27, 2016

Chair Baker, Vice-Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for allowing Representative Reineke and I to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 429, which would allow automotive technicians and motor vehicle technicians at retail stores the opportunity to participate in the Incumbent Workforce Voucher Program.

The Incumbent Workforce Training Voucher Program is administered by the Ohio Development Services Agency and provides much needed training dollars to Ohio's incumbent workforce for development. It is a popular and effective program, having used all of its dollars in past fiscal years. There have been \$7.5 million allocated in FY 16 and FY 17 each.

The Incumbent Workforce Voucher Program currently covers individuals and businesses in a variety of targeted industries, including the automotive industry and its technicians at automotive manufacturers; however, it does not include automotive technicians employed in retail stores such as auto dealerships, Goodyear, NTB, and independently owned car mechanic shops. House Bill 429 would give these retail businesses, and their employers, the opportunity to apply for the program to advance their skills and career. The ability for these incumbent to advance their career and be promoted, would then create the ability for more entry level automotive technicians to be hired. The Department of Jobs and Family Services lists automotive technicians as one of the in-demand occupations.

It is important to note, House Bill 429 does not call for additional money to DSA for the training program, but rather it allows technicians who previously didn't qualify, apply for money already available. This bill would help to fill the current skills gap for automotive technicians and prepare the existing workforce to grow and meet future demands.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 429. Representative Reineke will further discuss the need for this bill, and then we would be happy to take any questions.

Columbus Office

Vern Riffe Center
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111

Phone: (614) 466-1374

Toll-free: (800) 282-0253

Fax: (614) 719-6981

Email: Rep88@ohiohouse.gov

Web: www.ohiohouse.gov



Bill Reineke

State Representative

88th House District
Sandusky County and
Portions of Seneca County

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Chair Baker, Vice Chair Romanchuk, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee: thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share sponsor testimony on House Bill 429. My colleague has already explained the mechanics of this legislation, so I will focus on providing perspective on why this bill fits into the greater workforce development mission we have pursued.

The demand for skilled technicians has never been higher. Right now, in my business, I could instantly higher a dozen top-tier technicians and pay them wages far above the state average. They are simply not available. We believe this legislation will help address the current shortage by giving technicians more opportunities to enter into a well-trained and well-paid career.

Specifically, I would like to share a few reasons why our communities and our economy need more auto technicians. From a community standpoint, consumers need the best level of care for their vehicles. As technology and innovation develop, automobiles become increasingly more complex. On top of that, recall issues are gaining national prominence. This is prompting more customers than ever to come to service repair facilities, not only in dealerships, but also in stores like Tireman, Firestone, Wal-Mart and other retail outlets. Addressing the shortage of qualified technicians would allow for the industry to meet increased consumer demand for these services.

As increased consumer demand is met, we will see important growth in our economy. When retail sales increase, the retailer is more likely to re-invest in capital, such as lifts, diagnostic equipment and service facilities. Additionally, the many outlets that perform retail services by trained technicians collect sales tax on the services that they sell. Increases in these services will result in increased revenue for the state and our local partners.

Another extremely important benefit is the fact that generating enthusiasm for an entry-level person to pursue his or her dream keeps that person on the straight and correct path to occupational development. Employees in this sector tend to focus on their personal career development. This type of employee could benefit more directly from work opportunities at the high school and community college level. Paid internship and training opportunities are certainly available with a very achievable reality of little to no college debt.

Allowing businesses to leverage funds through the Incumbent Workforce Training Voucher program would be a win for all involved. Businesses would better meet increasing consumer demand. Current technicians would make better opportunities for themselves and move up the employment ladder. New technicians would get their feet in the door as they fill the employment vacuum left by incumbent technicians. Consumers would benefit from better service and protection for one of the most significant investments they make. And our state would see better economic outcomes throughout our communities, a goal we are all working toward making a reality.

Chair Baker and members of the committee, this legislation is a step forward in making our workforce more qualified for the opportunities ahead. I thank you for the opportunity to share testimony with you today. Representative Antani and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.