

**TESTIMONY OF**  
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**OLATHE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Before the**  
**KANSAS HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**February 8, 2012**

Good morning. I'm Kathy Musgrave, Administrator of Career and Technical Education programs for the Olathe School District. Our programs serve between 500 and 600 students annually including students from seven other adjoining districts. Our programs save significant costs and duplicative services at Wellsville, Spring Hill, Blue Valley, DeSoto, Gardner, and other nearby districts.

Joining me today are Taylor Wright and Ryan Callahan, two of our CTE students who are also (officers of state student organization.)

I appreciate the opportunity to express my views regarding the Career and Technical Education related sections of HB 2620.

Before addressing those matters I want to commend this committee and the Kansas legislature for its commitment to career and technical education. We are all in agreement, I believe, that CTE programs can provide a pathway to successful careers for our young people, and to the creation of needed jobs in critical industries such as health care, manufacturing, aviation, engineering and technology and many others.

I am here today to express my view, and that of many of my colleagues, that the CTE section of HB 2620 and its attempt to reduce or eliminate so-called duplicative programs is well-intentioned but misses the mark in some critically important ways. As you know, this section would eliminate funding for high school CTE programs if a postsecondary institution within 30 miles offered the programs, and if there was sufficient space for high school students. (there is not space for all of our students at our area colleges) I appreciate the intended benefits, but I believe there's another side to the coin.

- First and foremost, high school is different from college. Trying to plug adolescent 15 and 16 year olds—many with developmental or economic challenges—into postsecondary classes on a college campus just won't work. Why? There are several reasons:
  - Teachers are different. My staff and I get calls and visits every day from parents who are concerned about their student's grades, progress, discipline issues or other matters. We are trained to be responsive to these concerns. Postsecondary instructors are not and in fact, are prevented in some cases from dealing with these issues by law.
  - Instruction is different. High School teachers are trained to motivate, inspire, cajole and do whatever it takes to help their student's succeed. Postsecondary instructors are trained to deliver the material. It's up to the student to learn.
  - Students are different. Youngsters in our programs come from some difficult backgrounds; students in foster families, emancipated students who sleep in cars, and of course your normal 16-year old who doesn't quite have it all together yet. We also have your college bound engineering students, nursing students, etc. but the college environment is not something most 16 year olds are ready for.
- Eliminating or limiting high school CTE programs would pull the rungs out of a highly successful ladder to success that we call stackable certification. Here's an example. My daughter in law, who is now a KU Med Center nursing administrator, embarked on a health care career more than 15 years ago by taking a Certified Nursing Assistant course at her High School. She graduated and took her certification to Johnson County Community College where she was able to skip over the basics and enroll in advanced nursing courses and graduated with a two-year nursing degree. From JOCO, she went on to KU and received her RN four-year nursing degree. She then went on to earn her Master's and PA degree, and is now finishing her dissertation for her PhD. By "stacking" her certifications starting in high school, Renee got a two year jump start on a meaningful career and was able to support herself with her credentials as she moved along the road of stackable certifications'
- Many of our students cannot afford to pay for college classes while still in high school. Our students presently receive "articulation credit" for community colleges for finishing credentials at the high school level in which they build on once they arrive at the community college – example: an auto technology student receiving credentials in a two-year high school program can go to college and finish 12 hours of college credit; then receive their 9 hours of college credit without charge for their high school work; what an advantage and a head start for the student!

I could go on but I will close with the story of an automotive technology student at our Mill Creek Center in Olathe. He's from a very poor family, he's struggled throughout his school career, he receives little or no support from home and his only choice seemed to be dropping out of high school and ending up in a dead-end job, at best. Fortunately, a high school counselor told him about our automotive program. He enrolled and for the first time he experienced success in the classroom thanks in large measure to the teachers who bent over backwards to help and encourage him. He stopped skipping school. He applied himself and graduated two years ago. Today, thanks to the educational bridge that high school CTE provided him, he is on a full-ride scholarship to an area college, he works summers at a well-known auto dealership and he should enter the workforce full-time in a few years with a skill that will earn him upwards of \$75,000 to start. All this because a high school program was there to help him mature, set his sights and move forward.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your attention and this opportunity to address this committee. I hope you will carefully consider my concerns as you work to improve career and technical education programs for today's and tomorrow's students, and for the Kansas employers who need their skills.

I would now like two of my students to share their personal experiences with the CTE programs in the Olathe School District.