

H.B. 4162 (Reilly, R-46)

OPPOSE

ACT WorkKeys testing is an integral part of how United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeships evaluate candidates for entry in the State of Michigan. With the demand for skilled tradespeople at its greatest level in decades, eliminating or hindering its administration to Michigan high school students would be damaging to the industries, the apprenticeship programs utilizing it, and the future careers of students who might enter these vocations.

Registered Apprenticeship programs, like Operating Engineers 324's, adhere to standards of entry and learning as coordinated with the US Department of Labor. These standards specify the number of hours of classroom learning, on-the-job training, and entry guidelines for each respective program.

As these programs include a level of hit-the-floor readiness on day one, they require a credible evaluation of each potential apprentice before acceptance into the program. One significant piece of this is obtaining a knowledge of their aptitude and education level as it applies to tasks they will be expected to do as part of their training and career. WorkKeys supplies us with the three essential components we need measured as part of an entry evaluation:

- Applied Math
- Work Place Documents (Reading for information)
- Graphic Literacy (Locating Information)

The 3 segments are scored separately and are based on levels from 1 to 7. ACT WorkKeys have been profiled for each trade and the scores are reflected in the O*net, or US Department of Labor Occupational Information Network, expectations for each occupation nationally. If a student achieves the required scores, we can have a reasonable expectation that they are academically prepared for entry into our program. If a student does not, they are aware of which areas of focus need more work, and can work to raise their knowledge of and scores in the respective area through focused high school learning, additional tutoring, or enrollment in a pre-apprenticeship program. Additionally, the WorkKeys test offers extensive remediation online, so students can practice for the test and become familiar with what is expected of them.

These standards are essential to the success of the trades. The offering of WorkKeys testing in Michigan High Schools guarantees all students an equal opportunity to take the test and become eligible to enter into a career providing skilled trades apprenticeship. Elimination of the test would cause significant, damaging ripples in the future of skilled trades careers in Michigan. USDOL registered programs will either need to find and vet a new test to measure incoming applicant's education, and vet said test option with the USDOL. That could take significant time, slowing entry into the programs.

More troubling, eliminating WorkKeys from required Michigan High School testing would place an undue burden on students to seek out and take the test independent of their schools. That would impact the ability for students from areas where these potential careers offer the most promise, including both inner-city and rural youths, to access a direct path into the trades and the life-changing potential that can come with it.

Now is the time to make access to apprenticeship programs and the careers they provide more, not less, accessible. WorkKeys is one of the most valuable tools Michigan has to do this, and preserving it should be of utmost importance.

Good morning,

My name is Lee Graham, and I am here today as a representative of two roles I serve – as the Labor-Management Education Committee Director for Operating Engineers 324, and as the Chairman for the Michigan Apprenticeship Steering Committee. First, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to hear testimony today.

ACT WorkKeys testing is an integral part of how United States Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeships evaluate candidates for entry into their Registered Apprenticeships. With the demand for skilled tradespeople at its greatest level in decades, eliminating or hindering its administration to Michigan high school students would be damaging to the industries, the apprenticeship programs utilizing it, and the future careers of students who might enter these vocations.

Registered Apprenticeship programs, like Operating Engineers 324's, adhere to Department of Labor Apprenticeship standards. These standards specify the number of Related Training classroom hours, on-the-job training, and entry process procedures for each respective program.

As these programs include a level of hit-the-floor readiness on day one, they require a credible evaluation of each potential

apprentice before acceptance into the program. One significant piece of this process is obtaining a knowledge of their aptitude and education level as it applies to tasks they will be expected to do as part of their training and career.

WorkKeys supplies us with the three essential components we need measured as part of an entry evaluation:

- Applied Math
- Work Place Documents (Reading for information)
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The 3 segments are scored separately and are based on levels from 1 to 7. ACT WorkKeys have been profiled for each trade and the scores are reflected in the O*net, or US Department of Labor Occupational Information Network, expectations for each occupation nationally. If a student achieves the required scores, we can have a reasonable expectation that they are academically prepared for entry into our program. If a student does not, they are aware of which areas of focus need more work, and can work to raise their knowledge of and scores in the respective area through focused high school learning, additional tutoring, or enrollment in a pre-apprenticeship program. Additionally, the WorkKeys test offers extensive remediation online, so students can practice for the test and become familiar with what is expected of them.

These standards are essential to the success of the trades. The offering of WorkKeys testing in Michigan High Schools

guarantees all students an equal opportunity to take the test and become eligible to enter into a career providing skilled trades apprenticeship. Elimination of the test would cause significant, damaging ripples in the future of skilled trades careers in Michigan. USDoL registered programs would need to find and vet a new test to measure incoming applicant's education, and revise that test with the USDoL. That would take significant time, slowing entry into the programs.

More troubling, eliminating WorkKeys from required Michigan High School testing would place an undue burden on students to seek out and take the test independent of their schools. That would impact the ability for students from areas where these potential careers offer the most promise, including both inner-city and rural youths, to access a path into the trades and the life-changing potential that can come with it.

Very rare is the student who has their career path completely chosen by 11th grade. Expecting them to predict their tract, and seek out a test they will need to enter it, is unrealistic. As skilled trades, we spend countless hours and dollars reintroducing ourselves to a generation of students who, in large part, are unknowledgeable or even completely unaware of the opportunities we present. Adding more steps to this process is counterproductive.

We support our educators whole heartedly, and are grateful for the difficult, often thankless job they do daily teaching our youth. We believe in their effort and their mission. We consider them to be partners, and are the most valuable resource in assisting us in our goal to identify and attract the next generation of skilled workers. We also agree that the ever-changing curriculum requirements and prevalence of standardized testing needlessly complicate their jobs, and that those factors are part of why we have a “skills gap” today.

However, eliminating WorkKeys testing is not the correct target.

Now is the time to make access to apprenticeship programs and the careers they provide more, not less, accessible. WorkKeys is one of the most valuable tools Michigan has to do this, and preserving it should be of utmost importance.

Thank you for your time.