



# TRANSFORMING OHIO FOR JOBS + GROWTH

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## 2016 MID-BIENNIUM REVIEW

### **STRENGTHENING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OHIOANS**

Ohio Governor John R. Kasich has consistently focused on reforms that help connect Ohioans of all ages to educational and employment opportunities. Helping Ohio workers more easily access meaningful employment and the training they need and keeping students interested in school and on pathways to success have been key priorities. With Gov. Kasich's leadership, Ohio has implemented a number of reforms to keep students engaged in school and find alternative ways to a high school diploma, while helping adults obtain the credentialing they need for a career. The governor's 2016 Mid-Biennium Review seeks to build on this progress by proposing additional ways to help Ohioans earn a high school diploma and strengthening opportunities for families to enroll their children in programs that will help them reach their full potential.

**Reforming Ohio's High School Equivalency Program:** The lack of a high school diploma can often be a barrier for those seeking employment. Ohio offers adults several avenues to complete their studies and earn a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. But the present system still has gaps for individuals, which can discourage some from participating and can be confusing for employers who may not understand the value of the various options. Gov. Kasich's 2016 MBR proposes several reforms:

- **Giving More Ohioans the Opportunity to Earn a High School Equivalency:** Ohio currently provides only one testing company's computer-based platform for adults looking to receive their high school equivalency certificate. This poses a challenge for those seeking an alternative format, such as a written exam. To help more adults get the certificate they need to increase career opportunities, the MBR will make additional testing options available in Ohio, bringing more competition into this marketplace.
- **Creating a Uniform High School Equivalency Certificate:** As Ohio works to increase the number of education options for adults, businesses looking to hire Ohioans are confronted by the wide, sometimes confusing array of high school equivalency options that job applicants can earn. By creating one single, uniform high school equivalency certificate issued by the Ohio Department of Education, this MBR initiative will give business leaders a greater level of confidence in the value of this credential.

#### **Increasing Educational Opportunities for K-12 Students:**

- **Giving High School Students a Jumpstart on Professional Licenses:** Thanks to earlier Kasich Administration initiatives, Ohio students have increased opportunities to earn college credit – tuition free – while still in high school. New reforms will extend similar opportunities to high school students in recognized pre-apprenticeship programs, giving these young Ohioans a jumpstart toward earning their professional credentials and getting students one step closer to good paying careers.
- **Expanding STEM Programs:** Ohio has seen a growth in educational opportunities for students in grades 6-12 who focus their studies on what are known as STEM classes (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education). Recently educators have also added the arts to these studies to better prepare students for

these careers, offered through what are known as STEAM. The governor seeks to expand STEM schools to all grade levels, while also allowing STEAM schools, offering additional opportunities for Ohio's children to be exposed to these increasingly important fields.

- Providing Additional Opportunities to Earn High School Credit: By allowing local school districts to provide simultaneous credit, students can earn high school credit in multiple subjects through cross-disciplinary integration.

**Working to Improve Educational Opportunities for Children of Active-Duty Military and Veterans**: Ohio will study barriers to educational achievement for children of veterans and military families, who often must move among multiple school districts over the course of their education.

**Transitioning More Ex-Offenders into Jobs**: The Kasich Administration has focused on policies that help those with a criminal conviction get back on their feet, become productive members of society and take part in the state's economic success. Each year, about 22,000 ex-offenders must wait as long as one year after leaving the prison system to apply for and receive their Certificate of Qualification for Employment, which is needed to be considered for employment in certain fields. Language in the MBR will authorize the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to allow certain offenders (those with vocational skills who have maintained low-security status) to apply to the courts for the needed certification immediately upon their release.

**BOTTOM LINE**: Everyone deserves access to the first-rate educational resources and encouragement that will prepare them for the broadest range of career opportunities. By reforming Ohio's high school equivalency options, recognizing the efforts of those in apprenticeship programs, expanding educational opportunities for military families and further strengthening STEAM education, Ohio will create more ways to help students of all ages find fulfilling careers and allow them to reach their God-given potential.

