



STATE SENATOR
TOM SAWYER

28TH DISTRICT

*****PRESS RELEASE*****
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Senator Sawyer's Bill that Allows Inmate Students to Earn Diplomas Passes Ohio Senate

"Win/Win Academy" students can earn high school credits while incarcerated

Columbus – The Ohio Senate voted to approve Substitute Senate Bill 86. The bill, introduced by Senator Tom Sawyer, will create a unique, drop-out recovery community school in partnership with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC). The "Win/Win Academy" will improve the re-entry of youth offenders back into the community by helping them earn a high school education.

"I'm grateful that my colleagues were able to come to a bipartisan agreement of this critical legislation," said Senator Sawyer. "Ohio continues to face serious and debilitating problems with the overcrowding of our state prison system and many of our student dropouts are ending up in prisons."

The bill will allow inmate-students to earn high school credits while incarcerated and achieve their diploma upon release. Initially housed in the Pickaway Correctional Institution, a single-gender ODRC institution, the school will integrate state academic standards with curriculum that has a demonstrated a record of improving student's achievement and lowering recidivism. They will be taught by Ohio licensed educators with the support of "Thinking Aides" who are formerly incarcerated graduate-mentors.

"These offenders can often lack both critical thinking skills and the necessary education to excel in the workforce," said Senator Sawyer. "Without education and the credentials that come with it, they are more likely to continue a life of crime. We are instead giving Ohio's youth an opportunity to contribute to their communities."

The academy will start as a pilot program that can be evaluated for its sustainability by 2013. The program will also be considered for expansion based on its success.

The bill will now be assigned to a committee in the Ohio House of Representatives and scheduled for committee meetings.