

**House Economic and Workforce Development Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives**

Rep. Paul Zeltwanger, Chairman

House Bill 2 Testimony  
of  
ConxusNEO

By  
Jenny Stupica and Carla Fitzpatrick  
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Good morning. Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, my name is Jenny Stupica and I am the Director of Manufacturing Engagement for ConxusNEO and I am here with my colleague Carla Fitzpatrick, who is the Business Strategy Coordinator and Human Resource Manager at Anderson International Corp. We are here to testify in support of House Bill 2.

ConxusNEO is a non-profit that provides leadership, expertise and facilitation to improve talent system partner performance through sector partnerships. We currently support three sectors – manufacturing, IT and healthcare. These networks are led by local businesses and designed to generate solutions to fill open positions and build a talent pipeline. We do this work by defining demand utilizing labor market information and industry insight gleaned from company partners, develop strategies to meet demand and implement these strategies. Our sector partnerships focus on generating awareness about in-demand occupations and helping individuals explore those opportunities. We're here today to talk about two additional functions that are fundamental to successfully preparing individuals for these opportunities – development and upskilling.

We are working with Stark State College and local manufacturers to develop fast track training that is aligned with industry need. The programming will be delivered in phases of 15 weeks or less that build upon one another both in college credits and industry recognized credentials. The training will be structured in a way that incumbent workers and individuals looking to better their job prospects can complete the training while still working. This allows companies to upskill their employees without losing production time and individuals can continue to work, maintaining an income and benefits while gaining valuable training. Each phase of programming will be offered throughout the year, allowing companies and individuals to utilize the training when they are ready.

We are also currently participating in a pilot program with the Akron Urban League and We Can Code IT, a coding bootcamp. This program, IGNITE-IT, is a 12-week program offered online and in-person by bootcamp instructors. It is designed to prepare the Urban League's clients for entry-level computer support roles by preparing them to earn

A+ and Network + certifications. Successful completers of the program will be placed in paid internships or support roles with a starting wage of \$30,000. We are optimistic this will also help us diversify the IT workforce and fill a gap for skilled talent that is needed for computer support roles.

At this point, I would like to turn things over to Carla Fitzpatrick from Anderson International Corp.

Good morning. As stated earlier, my name is Carla Fitzpatrick and I am the Business Strategy Coordinator and Human Resource Manager at Anderson International Corp. located in Stow, Ohio.

We design, engineer and manufacture capital machinery for the rubber/polymer, oilseed and pet food industries and export about 80% of our products worldwide. One of our greatest challenges has always been finding skilled talent to produce our products. To add to this concern, roughly 20% of our workforce is looking to retire in the next 3-5 years and we lack the bench strength to replace them once they do.

We began participating with the ConxusNEO Manufacturing Sector partnership in early 2015. We could not afford to sit back and wait for someone else to fix the skills gap, we needed to be a part of the solution in building the next generation of skilled manufacturers. This could not be done on our own as it is much larger than we, at Anderson, have the bandwidth to do. We understood that along with other manufacturing companies, we needed to put aside our individual needs and work together to solve the problem. The sector partnership brings everyone to the table and we are able to put aside our differences and work together for the greater good of the industry. Without this comradery, we may all fail. Our sector partners divide and conquer the workload, focusing on industry awareness and educational partnerships. When I can't get to something, I know without a doubt that other companies in the sector partnerships will cover the need and vice versa. We have created a fantastic team, all pulling in the same direction, sharing best practices and workloads when it comes to workforce development.

While Industry awareness is good, it is not enough... individuals looking to enter manufacturing need training to not only begin a career but to grow once they start. This is why micro-credentials are so important. These training programs can be set up in a way that works well for individuals and for companies. By creating learning opportunities in smaller units, individuals will be able to take classes in the evening or weekends and manufacturers will be able to produce products to meet customer demands. Individuals can earn credentials at their pace and in areas of their interest, controlling the pace and direction they choose to grow.

Passing HB 2 will help ensure that the programs already being developed will become a reality and that the manufacturing industry will begin to develop strong candidates for the large numbers of open positions we all need to fill.

House Bill 2 is a much-needed priority focus on workforce development, that centers on micro-credentials, short term industry recognized certificates and grants for industry sector partnerships. We appreciate the opportunity to speak with the committee this morning. We would like to thank Representatives Cross and Lepore-Hagan for their work on this legislation. We would also like to thank the DeWine administration and especially the Lt. Governor for his work on these very important issues. We would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.