

**Testimony before the Ohio House of Representatives,  
Economic and Workforce Development Committee**

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Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, and members of the Ohio House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on Substitute HB 2, and how Ohio's need for a highly skilled incumbent workforce will be bolstered by increasing access to industry-recognized microcredentials. My name is David Harrison, President of Columbus State Community College.

Columbus State is one of the largest and most comprehensive colleges in Ohio serving more than 46,000 students annually. We are by far the most diverse higher education institution in our region, and have strategic focus on student success through deep partnerships. In January the college was recognized with the Leah Meyer Austin Award, the highest honor of the national organization Achieving the Dream, given annually to the community college that has shown outstanding performance in student success. Last month we had our largest and most diverse graduating class in the college's history, at a time when our enrollment is nowhere near historic highs.

We have a partner-first focus at Columbus State, and have lead a public-private partnership known as the Central Ohio Compact since 2011. Through this coalition of employers, K-12 districts, and universities, we have developed a regional approach to workforce development. Columbus State convenes a Workforce Advisory Council comprised of the chief talent officers of the largest employers in the region, which has become the voice of the employer in developing workforce priorities for Central Ohio. The Compact and the Workforce Advisory Council have become important incubators for innovation in employer-higher education partnerships.

I'd like to share some examples of employer partnerships that have resulted from this coalition.

**Amazon Web Services.** Columbus State was one of a small group of community colleges nationally that AWS Educate used as a development partner for an associate degree in Cloud Technology. Embedded in this degree program are certificates leading to the AWS Practitioner and the AWS Developer credential. This program was developed in conjunction with key employers in Central Ohio, including Accenture, American Electric Power, Nationwide, and JPMorgan Chase.

**Nationwide.** While the AWS development process focused on the emerging workforce, Nationwide has urgent needs to build the skills of current employees. We launched strategic discussions with Nationwide leaders that led to certification programs in software development, cybersecurity and data analytics. Instruction for these certifications is provided onsite to current Nationwide employees. Many of these students are currently working in information technology, but their skill set does not match the growth areas of the company. This certification process will enable them to move from a legacy skill set with diminishing prospects to rapidly growing, high demand roles.

**JPMorgan Chase.** We are offering a similar program at JPMorgan Chase, with a different group of employees. Chase identified a number of job families that would be unnecessary in 12-24 months through technological advances. They wanted a growth path for the employees in these jobs. We are providing a software development program for Chase associates, on site, providing a path from a \$45,000 per year job that is at risk to a \$75,000 per year job that is in high demand.

**Amazon Fulfillment.** Amazon's fulfillment centers are on their way to employing 7,000 people in Central Ohio, 10,000 statewide. Their Career Choice program is designed to enable their associates to gain credentials to help move them from a distribution center role to a professional career. Columbus State offers certificate programs on-site at their Etna location, helping associates prepare for careers in healthcare, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. Through our Workforce Advisory Council, we are working with other employers

to develop a career path for individuals to move from Amazon upon completion of the credential into a high demand role at another company. This regional talent “ecosystem” has the potential to become a national model.

**Columbus State as the Intermediary.** As you can see, we have developed a successful process of providing industry-recognized credentials to incumbent employees at employer locations, moving them into high growth fields. While we have been doing this on our own, there has been no funding associated with the capacity-building required to do this well, at scale, in a sustainable way. Funding HB 2 would enable Columbus State and other regional intermediaries to build a team that can help companies access this program in a convenient, business-friendly way.

Thank you for allowing me to share our work with you today. I’ll be happy to answer any questions you might have.