



Written Testimony to the House Economic & Workforce Development Committee
on House Bill 386

The Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program

February 12, 2020

Chairman Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) is pleased to support House Bill 386, the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program, sponsored by Representatives Hoops and Sobecki.

With truck driving academies and CDL short-term training programs throughout the state, Ohio's community colleges are on the front line of helping the trucking industry meet the growing demand for trained drivers and we are pleased to join the Ohio Trucking Association in advancing this commonsense proposal to meet the growing demand for trained drivers. HB 386 would create the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program that provides a combination of grant and loan opportunities for students enrolled in a certified commercial truck driver's license school. CDL training programs can usually be completed in 10 weeks or less and lead directly to a job with a starting average salary of at least \$40,000. Despite this, our colleges know first-hand that prospective students often walk away from this promising opportunity because they simply cannot afford it.

Ohio's community colleges and our business partners have long advocated that the government should fully embrace the value that short-term certificates have in providing a postsecondary pathway to a good paying job. Currently, students in short-term training programs are not eligible to receive any assistance through the federal Pell Grants or the Ohio College Opportunity Grant program. This is counterintuitive to sound workforce policy aimed at addressing the skills gap and creates unnecessary barriers from pursuing short-term training programs that lead directly to good paying careers for many low or moderate-income individuals and families.

Many community college students are either working adults or are recently unemployed or displaced workers, so their limited ability to pay for these courses is often a primary barrier to pursuing a CDL certificate. OACC believes that HB 386 is a smart and targeted approach to helping individuals pursuing the career path by providing scholarship opportunities to them.

The Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program is a smart investment that will help deliver a critical need for one of Ohio's most critical industries and assist more individuals take the leap into this in-demand field. This bill will provide more opportunities for Ohioans to help quickly move them into a self-sustaining career without the burden of taking on significant student debt.