

OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
WRITTEN TESTIMONY  
MAY 8, 2019  
Melissa Clark  
Mount Pleasant, Ohio

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Melissa Clark, Senior Curriculum Program Manager, at WGU.

Western Governors University is a private, nonprofit, regionally accredited institution, that started its state affiliate in Ohio in 2018. Throughout my nine-year tenure at Western Governors University, I have seen a lot of the good in what we do to help change the lives of our students. I have had opportunity, and joy, throughout my professional career to watch other WGU state affiliates form, grow, and flourish with the positivity they have brought to their state and the advancement of their state's citizens. I was encouraged and excited by the new opportunities we would have within my own state, with the addition of the WGU Ohio affiliate. It is my hope that we do not diminish the opportunity we have to together initiate great change within our state by passing revisions to a bill that will dissolve WGU Ohio.

At present, 694 Ohians enrolled at WGU receive an annual Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG), capped at \$576, the lowest amount of all eligible institutions receiving such funds. This financial funding is life-changing to these Ohioans, who are striving to implement change for themselves, their families, and the community in which they live.

WGU's Teachers College, is CAEP-accredited, which has rigorous teacher preparation standards that ensure excellence in educator preparation programs. With the language in the proposed revision, we will no longer be able to recommend the 743 current students in our Teachers College for Ohio educator licenses. Instead, our in-state teachers, will need to apply as out-of-state applicants, even though they reside, work, and obtained their degrees within Ohio.

WGU provides an affordable, flexible model to an underserved adult population. The model we offer allows adult working students to maintain employment, provide for their families, while engaging with learning that will allow them to advance their professional career. The 3,176 Ohioans currently enrolled in WGU's programs are your constituents. The disruption that the proposed revisions to House Bill 166 would pose to individuals and families as well as workforce development on our state would be damaging. To that end, I respectfully request that you remove the language in lines 10532-10536 and lines 24527-25436.