



Ohio Senate
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Good Afternoon, Chairwoman Keller, Vice Chairman Riedel, and Ranking Member Ingram. I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony on SB 181, a way in which Ohioans can work to earn a college degree, while graduating debt free.

Today in the U.S., college students will rack up on average \$29,843 in student debt just to graduate. Senate Bill 181 would direct the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education to create a template for workforce-education partnership programs. These workforce-education partnership programs, would allow a student to work part time, approximately 20-25 hours per week, while pursuing a degree in the major of their choice. This partnership is based off of a similar program at the University of Louisville titled Metro College. There, students are paid a regular wage as a third shift part-time package handler at UPS while their tuition is paid for by UPS. The partnership there has been a win-win-win for the student, the school, and the employer. UPS has seen their average employee retention time soar from around 20 weeks to over 200 weeks. The university has seen higher graduation rates from students enrolled in the program than “regular” students, and finally, the student receives a paycheck and has their tuition paid for so long as they maintain a C average or better.

In Butler County, we’ve launched a pilot workforce-education program with Miami University’s regional campuses at Middletown and Hamilton that we hope will serve as a template for this bill. Currently, we have over twenty students attending Miami University regional campuses while working for four different Butler County businesses. In addition to all of the benefits that Metro College offers in Kentucky, at Miami, and in this bill, we’re adding housing as another benefit. Students not only will learn knowledge and skills through their employment and studies, but they will also learn valuable life skills, living in free housing with other students that are going through the same life experiences. This part of the pilot program and bill has attracted the interest of many, including NFL Hall of Fame running back, Jim Brown. Mr. Brown and his Amer-i-can program have not only expressed support for the program and bill, they have expressed interest in being involved.

This bill, and this program are different than just a normal co-op program, or a college internship. In other programs, one enrolls at a university, and then at some point in the future may interview for and receive a part-time job. In this scenario, the person is a student with a part-time job, having to worry about juggling competing interests and time commitments. Here, the person is an employee who is also taking classes. The employee does not need to worry about missing classes for work, and visa-versa, it is a true partnership between the employer, student, and school.

I'd like to close my testimony with one final example that I think illustrates how big this bill and program can be for Ohio students. The Ohio State University quarterback practices, or "works at", football for 20-25 hours a week, not including the extra hours of games and film. The quarterback receives full tuition and housing while graduating debt free. A student involved in the Workforce Partnership Program will work for 20-25 hours a week, receive full tuition with housing while graduating debt free, AND receive a paycheck for the work that they do.

This bill and the program that creates is a great deal for Ohio students, universities, and businesses. Ohio students have a chance to pursue a college degree while graduating debt free and picking up valuable skills with the opportunity to advance in, and learn from, a company. Ohio businesses get a chance to mold employees, and teach them their company from the ground up, knowing that they will be there for the long haul. Finally, Ohio universities have students that are not only learning valuable classroom knowledge, but real-life skills that will lead to more experienced and versatile graduates.

I hope that you will help me give Ohio students the opportunity to graduate with college degrees debt free. I thank you for your time, and am open to answer any questions that you may have.