Good morning, Chairman Carfagna, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education. My name is Kent Trofholz, and I’m the Executive Director of the Ohio-Michigan Association of Career Colleges and Schools, or OMACCS. OMACCS is a membership organization dedicated to advancing the interests of Ohio’s career colleges and schools and the students they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how career education contributes to Ohio’s workforce, and specifically address the critical need for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG). We are grateful that House Bill 166 recognizes the need for OCOG to pave the way to high-quality jobs.

As you can see, I brought a colleague and a graduate with me today. I would like to introduce Mr. Peter Martinello, Ohio Regional Vice President, of Fortis College, as well as Fortis graduate Yasmin Bono. Peter will highlight how Fortis is contributing to the skilled workforce we need in Ohio, and why OCOG is a key ingredient to the success of our students. Yasmin will share how OCOG has helped her pursue a rewarding career.

**Meeting the needs of students and Ohio’s workforce**

In a press release, Chancellor Gardner said that Governor DeWine’s budget “may be the most student-focused state budget” he’s seen that centers on “affordability while helping prepare Ohio for a fast-changing economy and high-quality jobs through workforce preparation, more need-based financial aid, and strategic scholarships.”

These aspirations for state-supported universities mirror what career colleges and schools already excel at and make our mission: putting students’ needs at the heart of instruction from enrollment to graduation to placement into better jobs as fast as possible.

Career colleges play a key role in the state’s education vision and workforce development strategy. Career colleges help fill the skills gap, supplying the workforce with well-trained employees to grow Ohio’s economy.
Our sector enrolls more than 60,000 students a year in more than 200 occupational fields. Of Ohio’s 225 career colleges and schools, 47 are degree-granting.

All career colleges and schools in Ohio are overseen by the State Board of Career Colleges and Schools, and colleges offering associate degrees or above are also overseen by the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

**Career college graduates ready for in-demand occupations**

Our qualified graduates are filling Ohio’s most in-demand occupations. 81 percent of career college students earned degrees in the fastest-growing occupations of business, health care, and technology.

*Here’s the best proof of the preparedness of career college graduates: 81 percent found employment in their field within 90 days of graduation.*

Because many of our students are non-traditional students with families and roots here, they’re more likely to ply their skills in Ohio’s workforce after graduation.

While career colleges comprised only 3.1% of all graduates of degree-granting institutions in 2017, they represented 9% of all students earning a health-related degree and 5% of all graduates in the state earning a computer/technology degree. Among the 4,211 career college graduates, 81% of them earned degrees in health, technology, and business.

*Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*
Career colleges serve economically disadvantaged

**Majority women students**

Data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) show that Ohio career colleges continue to educate the most under-served populations in the state relative to the other educational institutions. More women, minorities and older students already in the workplace are enrolled in career colleges proportionately than other institutions of higher learning.

**Women currently represent about 73 percent of the enrollment at career colleges. That average is about 15-18 percent more than other colleges and universities.**

Enrollment By Gender

- **Women**: 73%
  - Women make up a significant number of career college enrollment compared to other sectors of higher education

- **Men**: 27%
  - 54.72% Public Universities
  - 56.01% Not-For-Profits
  - 57.29% Community Colleges
  - 72.70% Career Colleges

- **Women**
  - 54.73% Public Universities
  - 43.99% Not-For-Profits
  - 42.71% Community Colleges
  - 27.30% Career Colleges

*Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*
Serving Ohio’s minorities

Turning to minority student enrollment, more than one-third of the total student population at our degree-grant career schools are minorities, higher than our higher-education counterparts. About 34 percent are African American and about 4 percent are Hispanic/Latino.

Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
Educating older adults

Career colleges serve an older student population. Approximately 63 percent of our students are 25 years of age or older. Many of the older career college students are workers who are looking for a fresh start in the job market or need retraining. Most of them do not receive financial support from their parents, and are funding their own education while paying bills and raising a family of their own. Many have tried public universities but found a career college model better suited to their educational goals and need for schedules that accommodate their jobs and families.

Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
Accelerating graduation

Graduation rates are a significant measure of how well institutions of higher education are performing, and career colleges outperform our public-sector peers. Although we’re always striving for higher numbers, our 43 percent graduation rate is remarkable considering the challenges our non-traditional students face. Only non-profit, private universities post better results.

Career schools in Ohio that consistently achieved higher graduation rates than public universities and community colleges.

Source: The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
Competitive tuition

Let’s turn to tuition. Often, career colleges are unfairly stereotyped as prohibitively expensive places for students to learn. In fact, the average annual cost of tuition at Ohio career colleges, at $13,894, is less than the average of all of Ohio’s tax-supported community colleges, state universities and their branches, and non-profits ($14,163.25).

It is also true that tuition is higher at career colleges than at public universities in large part because our sector receives no state subsidies.

As it relates to student tuition, the career education model of higher education is devoid of many of the intrinsic costs that four-year public and private universities especially must sustain, such as sports stadiums, student housing, workout studios, student unions, and other facilities. Our colleges don’t have these facility maintenance costs to pass on to students in the form of higher tuition and student fees.

Perhaps more to the point is rather than depend on Ohio taxpayers to subsidize our operations, we respond to the marketplace. That makes us nimble in meeting employer needs, quickly adding faculty and programs that train students in fast-growing occupations.
Educational value and return on investment

Appraising the value of higher education credentials involves more than the price of tuition, however. What students desire from their education is based on their unique circumstances. In that respect, a certificate or diploma isn’t that different from anything of value that a consumer buys. Compare a Honda Civic, priced at $20,000 with a $30,000 Ford F150. Objectively, the sedan is more affordable, if price is the only consideration. But the owner of a construction company who needs a truck to run his business will opt for the costlier pick-up.

In a similar manner, our students research their options through filters, evaluating the length of time it will take to earn a certificate or degree, and how the credential will increase their earning and career potential after graduation. For them, career education is the answer to getting further faster. The proof is that 81 percent of students are on the job within days of graduation.

Students tell us they value the flexible schedules, small campuses and classrooms, low ratio of students to faculty, and personal attention. These benefits enable them to stay in college, complete their degrees, and move into jobs for which they have prepared.

As long as Ohio’s career college students and schools continue to provide a high-quality education that leads to meaningful employment and career advancement, thousands of women, minorities, veterans, and low-income Ohioans will prioritize career education.

The return on investment not only benefits college graduates, but all Ohio residents who enjoy a better economy and quality of life when people are fully employed in the jobs that are building our state’s economic future. Many of our students are overcoming family legacies of poverty and welfare. When we improve their opportunities in life, we also increase their independence and create new taxpayers, not tax users.
Our sector’s commitment to scholarship aid

Most of our students are financially independent of their parents, and pay their own way through school, while simultaneously paying rent or a mortgage, a car loan, medical bills, child care, and in many instances, saving for or paying for their children’s college education.

They cannot fund the cost of education entirely out of their own pockets and need the help of scholarship aid. There are three financial sources to fill a potential student’s tuition bucket: federal aid, such as the Pell Grant, personal borrowing, and scholarships.

I’d like to tell you about two sources of aid that are intuitional-based and unique to our sector. First is the LEADS! Scholarship, an acronym for Leadership, Excellence, and Dedication Scholarship. The scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who meet qualifying criteria. Participating colleges and schools provide in-kind donations to supplement the student’s tuition or cover it 100 percent. The target audience is high school seniors who may not be interested in attending a traditional institution or want to attend a career college that offers programs that may not be available in traditional post-secondary institutions.

The second source of tuition aid is our Workforce Tuition Scholarship, funded by a non-profit foundation overseen by OMACCS with its own Board of Directors. Funding is generated through a portion of the Association’s online courses and deposited directly into the foundation’s bank account. Our target audience is financially needy students currently attending one of our member career colleges and schools or registered to attend.

Since OMACCS offers the LEADS! Scholarship program and the Workforce Tuition Scholarship Foundation to all schools, 100 percent of our member schools have access to scholarships to offer their students. Last academic year, a total of 46 current college students or college-bound, high school seniors received $88,000 in scholarship aid – an average of $1,900 per student.

In addition, approximately one-third of our member schools offer one or more scholarships from external sources, ranging in amounts up to $15,000.

One of the most vital and widely used forms of tuition assistance is the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. Peter Martinello, of Fortis College, will talk in more detail about how the program contributes to the state’s college attainment goals.

Thank you for your attention. I’m happy to answer your questions at this time, or I can address your questions after Peter and Yasmin testimony.