

Chairman Kunze, Ranking Member Williams and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

My name is Betty Young and I serve the students of Hocking Technical College as their President.

The State of Ohio has a goal of increasing workforce development through short-term certificates and degree programs that meet growing labor demands. In his 2019 State of the State speech, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine called for new investments in workforce development to help both Ohio citizens and job creators produce a sustainable ecosystem of skilled workers. “We’re going to invest more in our current career-tech centers and two-year community colleges, and we are going to create at least 10,000 industry certificates.”

Working with the leadership of Fairfield County and the City of Lancaster, Hocking Technical College has created a proposal that will improve access to education and training programs for individuals in counties currently unassigned to a technical or community college district. The proposal focuses efforts on the existing needs of industry along with emerging opportunities for innovative training programs that address skill development and supports new business development in Southeastern Ohio. It is our hope that all leaders in this great state will recognize that Hocking College is well-positioned to lead these efforts and will help support this initiative to create a sustainable workforce in Fairfield County and to meet the immediate training needs for a new international employer with initially 300 new jobs with expansion based on the availability of a trained workforce.

Hocking College has met with this new manufacturing employer at their headquarters in Canada and has aligned the education and training needs with programs Hocking will provide to assure the workforce is prepared on day one. Fairfield County has provided the facilities for the new workforce center, a 70,000 sq ft classroom and lab facility to accommodate short-term industry training, stackable certificates, apprentice pathways, and associate degree programs aligned to needs of the community. These will include welding, advanced robotic welding, mechatronics and plant maintenance.

In addition the community has requested workforce programs in healthcare (STNA), CDL, Construction Management (carpentry and electrical), HVAC and Welding, all designed to meet a critical need for workers in high-demand industries. These programs will be modeled after the programs currently being offered by the College at its Nelsonville and Logan campuses, ensuring curriculum relevancy and high probability for student success. The proposed site of the Hocking College Lancaster workforce center provides enough space for this expansion of programming, guaranteeing employer needs will be met across a variety of industry sectors. Fairfield County is currently unassigned to a community or technical college district and as a result has missed opportunities for developing the ecosystem needed for the workforce of a growing community. Hocking College can fill that need.

The College has requested \$1,255,000 for the start-up of the Hocking College Lancaster workforce center. Ohio University Lancaster branch has expressed an interest in establishing a working relationship with Hocking College to create a seamless pathway for career growth and development. We would recommend \$750,000 for Hocking College to establish, in the facilities provided by the county, a workforce center to offer the short-term stackable credit bearing certificates, apprentice pathways, and associate degrees to meet the workforce needs and that Ohio University Lancaster receive \$500,000 to develop and implement in collaboration with Hocking College a seamless bachelor degree program in advanced manufacturing and robotics building on the certification and associate degree of Hocking College in this field. Project total for the FY 2020 \$1,255,000.

This project represents the best of community and institutional collaboration through the contribution of facilities by Fairfield County, Hocking College certificate and associate degree programming and Ohio University-Lancaster development of a seamless advanced manufacturing and robotics program. It also represents the best in development of a workforce ecosystem in a community that has new industry commitment and opportunities with industrial space availability to add many more jobs to a region with significant income disparity as compared to the state as a whole.

I am respectfully requesting that you restore this funding for a workforce center in Fairfield County as originally recommended in the executive budget.