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TO: Ohio Senate Committee on Higher Education

FROM: Dr. Julian Earls, President Entrepreneurial Engagement Ohio, Special Advisor to President Cleveland State University, Director, NASA Glenn Research Center (Ret.)

SUBJECT: Requesting your support to fully fund the *Believe in Ohio* program

It was my hope to be able to give testimony to your committee on Wednesday, however I serve on a board that analyzes alternatives for federal Homeland Security, and I have been called to Washington this week to discuss current concerns. In my absence, please allow me to share some thoughts with you in writing.

Throughout my career I have been an outspoken advocate for STEM education, not just for a relatively small number of select students, but for all Ohio students, i.e., urban, suburban, and rural students. In my view, unless our State embraces an "All Hands on Deck" strategy that engages all Ohioans, both women and men, young and old, of all races and backgrounds, Ohio will not be able to compete in today's increasingly challenging world-wide innovation economy. .

In 2007, Dr. Karen Holbrook, the then President of The Ohio State University, and I co-chaired *the Science and Mathematics Education Policy Advisory Council (SAMEPAC)* for the State of Ohio. SAMEPAC developed findings and made policy recommendations for improvements in mathematics and science education in Ohio to the Ohio Board of Regents, Ohio Department of Education, and the Governor. Regrettably, as too often happens in government, our recommendations were largely placed on the shelf, with few of them being implemented.

In 2012, the 501(c)(3) that I chair, Entrepreneurial Engagement Ohio, in collaboration with the Ohio Academy of Science, worked with members of the Ohio Board of Regents to develop the *Believe in Ohio* program designed to implement a number of OBOR Commercialization Task Force recommendations. In 2013, the General Assembly appropriated \$5 million to develop the program, which was successfully implemented during 2014-2016 and included over 300 teachers at 150 high schools in 50+ Ohio counties, and more than 10,000 students. However, in 2016-2017, funding for the program was not renewed due to budget shortfalls.

Since then, the *Believe in Ohio* team has evolved and improved the program, seeking to bring together many of the education silos that currently exist into a focused and multi-faceted program to retain our best and brightest and highest potential entrepreneurial and innovative students in Ohio. An important element of the program is to award two hundred and thirty-five \$10,000 Innovation scholarships annually, coupled with a promotional program to encourage our high school students to continue their education and careers in Ohio.

The recommendations that SAMEPAC developed in 2007, and the Board of Regents developed in 2012, are even more critical for Ohio's continued prosperity in today's worldwide Innovation Economy. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, now more than ever, this program is needed to help ensure our state's continued prosperity. Please fully fund the *Believe in Ohio* program in the 2020-2021 Biennial Budget.

Thank you,

*Julian Earls*

Julian Earls, Ph.D.