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Chair Hite, Vice Chair Sawyer, members of the Senate Finance Sub-Committee on Education, I am Matt Williams, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at KnowledgeWorks, a Cincinnati-based operating foundation, focused on offering a portfolio of innovative education approaches and advancing aligned policies, that allow each student to thrive.

I am here today to testify in support of a major priority to KnowledgeWorks: Competency Education. The call for up to ten Competency-Based Education Pilots for K-12, which would be funded in aggregate at \$2.5 million per year, represents a significant opportunity to strategically advance personalized learning in the state.

KnowledgeWorks believes that competency-based education provides an important opportunity for Ohio's children. Our ability to compete as a state—and for communities to attract growth industries and create jobs—demands a fresh approach to public education. The one-size-fits all philosophy of our past and too much of our present doesn't ensure our future economic and democratic success. Personalized, student-centered approaches to teaching and learning are on the rise in schools across Ohio. We encourage the Senate to advance competency-based practices that give all students the opportunity and intensive supports to master the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and career.

KnowledgeWorks defines competency education by the following elements:

1. Students advance upon mastery, not seat time.
2. Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
3. Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
4. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
5. Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.¹

By integrating all five elements, high quality competency education ensures that each student graduates with the knowledge and skills he or she needs to be successful in college and career. Definitional language is essential. Simply put strong definitional language leads to quality implementation which leads to sustainability and scalability.

¹ Patrick, S. and Sturgis, C. Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills. *A CompetencyWorks Issue Brief, International Association for K-12 Online Learning. (2013).* http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol_cw_issuebrief_building_mastery_final.pdf

The pilots, proposed by the Governor and passed by the House, would breathe greater life into Ohio's personalized learning and education innovation investments by offering new opportunities to districts, schools, and, most importantly, students.

These pilots should ensure districts address the following elements in their respective plans:

1. Focus on high quality implementation of competency-based approaches that emphasize mastery while closing achievement gaps between subpopulations of students.
2. Administer a balanced system of summative, interim, performance, and formative assessments that measure student mastery of academic knowledge and social and emotional competencies.
3. Build capacity of the state and districts to continuously improve competency-based approaches, identifying what works and refining strategies to maximize success.
4. Implement a personalized and adaptive system of learning and supports to close achievement gaps and ensure all students remain on pace to graduation.

Furthermore, to ensure that the investment is both systemic and sustainable, KnowledgeWorks calls on the Senate to enact two specific recommendations essential to the success of the competency-based education proposals in the state:

1. The competency-based pilots should not only plan for implementation, an important element in success, but be implemented at a district and not just at a school level. For example, in larger districts this could be within a feeder pattern (elementary, middle, and high school) with support and alignment from the district central office. This approach will allow for greater scale and sustainability post-pilot.
2. In addition to the current recommendation of \$2.5 million (annually) included in the Governor's proposal and the House budget, 2.5% (\$2.5M/Year) of the recommended Straight A allocation of \$100M/Year should be allocated to support these competency-based pilots to not only ensure that grants are district-wide, but also to invest adequately in essential tools, assessments, and professional development needed to support the move to competency-based instruction; provide an evaluation to allow for the data needed to scale this approach further in the state; and lastly provide connective tissue between the proposed competency-based investments in K-12 and higher education.

This is a critical moment for the state of Ohio. We, as a state, have the potential to invest in pilots that begin to build a system that can transform the way we educate our students. A competency-based pilot is the next step in this transformation - one that will help districts identify high-quality strategies while empowering policymakers to build a policy framework that will work in Ohio to maximize student success.

KnowledgeWorks stands ready to help with this effort in any appropriate way possible.

Finally, I want to thank you and applaud your leadership and the leadership of Governor Kasich on this important, high impact issue.