



Ohio Association of Community Colleges

Chairman Oelslager, ranking member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jack Hershey, and I am the President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges.

Increased SSI Funding

We greatly appreciate the Senate's proposed increase in SSI funding for colleges and universities. It is now one of the largest increases in state support that higher education has seen in many years. However, we have grave concerns about the way the new money is distributed. Two years ago Ohio's college presidents adopted a 100% performance based funding formula for higher education – the most aggressive formula in the nation. Because we put the right incentives in place, course completions and degree completions are up, and more graduates are entering the workforce. The proposed Senate distribution method for these new funds would no longer allow us to say that SSI is distributed 100% based on performance in Ohio. Instead the Senate proposal returns to the incentives of old, and distributes the funding based on enrollment figures, and rewards universities with the highest tuition levels, which we believe is a mistake. We would ask that the additional SSI funding flow through the existing state funding formulas.

Bachelor's Degrees at Community Colleges

Given the Senate's interest in college affordability over the last year, it is nothing short of surprising that the substitute budget bill removes a provision of law that would have allowed community colleges to offer affordable applied bachelor's degrees in select fields that do not compete with their local public university. This reform, which saw no one publicly ask for its removal, would have mirrored actions already taken by more than half of the states in our country, including the neighboring economies of West Virginia, Indiana, and that state up north. This is an idea that had received nothing but universal praise, which is why the Senate's actions are so surprising.

The discussion about this proposal first began when the University of Cincinnati phased out a program which affected 78 students enrolled in a dual admission program with Cincinnati State Community College. The program prepared students for employment in food research and development, which requires a bachelor's degree. The Greater Cincinnati area is home to numerous food product manufacturers including Wornick, Frisch's, Kroger, Wild Flavors, JTM Meats and Skidmore Sales, and highly trained workers are needed for this growth industry. Recognizing that area employers still needed graduates, President Ono expressed his support that Cincinnati State should be able to offer bachelor's degree programs.

By removing this language from the bill, you are removing the workforce pipeline for this industry in the Cincinnati area. What message are we sending to those Ohio companies, if we chose to block their access to a qualified workforce?

Governor Kasich, the Ohio House of Representatives, and the presidents of both Ohio's community colleges and public universities all supported this forward-thinking reform. They acknowledge that there will be times when the local university is simply not interested, for whatever reason, in offering a particular bachelor's degree program. We hope the Senate reconsiders the removal of this cost-saving and jobs-producing initiative.

OCOG

The goal of the Ohio College Opportunity Grant is to help our state's poorest citizens be able to afford a college education. Yet in 2009, Governor Strickland passed into law a change that eliminated access to OCOG for 29,000 community college students. Since then, the state has spent more than \$200 million to encourage its poorest

Potential Applied Bachelor's Degrees

Health Care Management
Technology

Industrial Management Technology

Forensic Accounting

Engineering Technology

Automotive Technology

Oil & Gas Technology

HVAC Technology

Mobile Application Development

Biometrics Security Systems
Technology

Fire Administration

Dental Hygiene

Culinology

Land Surveying

Digital Forensics and Cybersecurity

Advanced Manufacturing
Technology – with pathways in
mechatronics, digital manufacturing
and sensor packaging

citizens to pursue the most expensive pathways to a college degree, and in turn many of those students have accumulated unnecessary levels of student debt.

We commend the Senate for increasing funding to the OCOG program, but ask that as OCOG funding continues to be restored, when will community college students, many of whom are working adults with families, be allowed to once again have full access to this program? The OACC supports the amendment outlined by Senator Cafaro in her report before this committee that would reverse the PELL-first decision made in 2009.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time and attention. We hope the Senate can support these two changes, neither of which requires the expenditure of any additional state funds. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.