



SENATOR MARK NORRIS

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

STATE OF TENNESSEE

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April 28, 2016

The Honorable Scott Oelslager
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

CHAIRMAN
RULES
MEMBER
FINANCE, WAYS AND MEANS
STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dear Senator Oelslager:

I have been the Senate Majority Leader in Tennessee since 2007, and am writing this letter to tell you about our experience with the Smart Tennessee program. As a State Senator, then the Majority Leader, I worked closely with Dr. Julie Heath (then of the University of Memphis) to garner the support of my colleagues to fund this innovative program.

When Dr. Heath presented her idea for Smart Tennessee to me, I was impressed by the approach (starting financial education in elementary school), the level of detail included in the plan, and her commitment to the program and its outcomes. I became an enthusiastic champion.

Smart Tennessee began in 2006, and by the time Dr. Heath left to take over the Economics Center at the University of Cincinnati in 2012, the program had reached over 75,000 students across the state, teaching even our youngest students about making responsible decisions, setting goals, and investing in their human capital. These lessons are particularly important for our most economically challenged students, teaching them that often the choices they make are the key to their advancement. The gains in student performance were very strong, indicating that our students were making great strides in their knowledge.

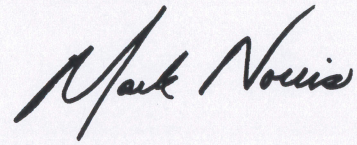
Smart Tennessee was an ambitious, groundbreaking program. I am proud to say that Tennessee was the first state in the country to address economic and financial literacy in this cutting-edge way. We were also proud to show off the program to a national audience when CNBC aired a segment highlighting a local school's implementation. I know that as a result, Dr. Heath's idea for a "Smart" program has been adopted by other states to similar success.

I hope this background on Tennessee's experience with Smart Tennessee will be helpful as you begin your deliberations on funding a Smart Ohio program. For myself, I am proud of my role in being the champion of a program that has had such a profound impact on my state.

TIPTON AND SHELBY COUNTIES
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If I can answer any questions, please let me know.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Norris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Mark Norris
Senate Majority Leader

MN:tv