

The Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
Testimony of H.B. 49, College Credit Plus
Southern State Community College
March 14, 2017

Chairman Perales, Ranking Minority Member Ramos and Members of the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education, my name is Kevin Boys and I am the President at Southern State Community College serving Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette, and Highland Counties in southern Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 49, specifically the provisions affecting College Credit Plus. I was honored to present testimony in support of the Chancellor's recommendation establishing into law College Credit Plus, and applaud the Governor and the Ohio General Assembly for crafting one of the most effective programs to increase the number of high school students earning college credit, and reducing the cost of college for Ohio's families.

Prior to my appointment as the fifth president of Southern State, I served for thirty-one years in K-12 education in two suburban Cincinnati school districts. Both districts had extensive Advanced Placement opportunities and as a result, participation in Ohio's Post-secondary Enrollment Options Program was limited. Upon arriving to serve the rural counties of Southern State Community College, I quickly learned that the extent of those Advanced Placement opportunities was largely unavailable in the high schools of our five-county rural service area. PSEO, as it was then called, was the only opportunity for most of these rural students to take advanced courses for college credit. Under the final year of PSEO, approximately 24% of our college's headcount consisted of high school students. Today, in only its second year implementing the rules of College Credit Plus, high school students comprise 43% of our college's enrollment. We utilize the default rates specified in the law for all courses. College Credit Plus is working. It is working to expand early college access to more high school students, to make college more affordable for Ohio families, and to best utilize Ohio's financial resources to accomplish these goals.

Ohio's community colleges play a central role in making college classes accessible not only on our campuses but in our local high schools. Southern State currently offers college courses in 32 high schools across 16 counties in southern Ohio. Tuition savings to families of students who attended Southern State College Credit Plus course offerings alone during the first year are estimated at **\$1,907,730**. These savings are calculated at Southern State's low tuition rate, so when a student chooses to matriculate to a state or private university or college, one could easily double these savings. When utilized to the fullest, students may save over half of their college expenses...there is simply no other efficiency and affordability measure that will come close to reducing the cost of college for Ohio's families.

As one of the leading institutions participating in College Credit Plus, I do have grave concerns about the proposed change making institutions of higher education responsible for supplying textbooks. This has

been the responsibility of the school district since the early days of PSEO dating back to 1989. It has enabled colleges like Southern State to provide and expand these college courses to our high schools when their teachers hold the required credentials. The proposed change included in H.B. 49 caps the district's cost of a textbook at \$10 per credit hour, or \$30 for a three hour course. The average cost of a single textbook at Southern State is \$ 133.44. The revenue at the default rate for a three hour course taught by the high school faculty is only \$125. Our campus continues to work with our schools to offer multiple ways of reducing textbook costs including textbook rentals, digital texts, and when feasible, the use of texts over multiple years. Additionally, 12 community colleges have joined together to apply for an Innovation Grant through the ODHE to identify and evaluate Open Educational Resources that could be used in high enrollment courses to virtually eliminate the cost of textbooks for certain courses. Even with these efforts, it would be unsustainable for us to offer college courses on the more than 30 high school campuses we serve under the requirements in H.B. 49. The increased access to college courses, especially in our most rural high schools may largely disappear, or offerings will be limited to those courses for which a high-quality Open Education Resource is available. This is counter-productive to our efforts to increase access and expand course offerings in technical areas in which there are high-demand jobs. We respectfully ask that the House delete this section of H.B. 49 while we continue to address the challenges posed by textbook costs.

There are several other proposed changes affecting College Credit Plus in H.B. 49 in a well-intended effort to improve the original College Credit Plus legislation. While I am certainly a proponent of continuous improvement, those improvements should rest with solid data and a demonstrated weakness or need. All of us may be tempted to "fix a problem" that comes to us by way of an experience or an anecdotal story. When one looks closely at the data reported for the first year on participation, course completion, and student success, it is evident that College Credit Plus is working well. One area in which it is not working well is the participation rate of economically disadvantaged students. It is my fear that the proposed changes in course availability, defining college readiness, and textbook costs would further erode, not enhance the availability of courses in our high schools and the participation of our state's neediest students. I would respectfully ask that the committee consider striking the recommended changes and allowing College Credit Plus to work another biennium before considering changes. Constant change can both be confusing to schools, students, and parents who are just now beginning to understand the rules, and often lead to unintended consequences. I realize that sometimes the hardest thing to do is to do nothing. Absent compelling data otherwise, I would urge the committee to exercise great restraint in making any changes to College Credit Plus that compelling data does not support. It would be tragic to undo the good that has been accomplished through College Credit Plus and shift the momentum toward reducing participation.

Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos and Members of the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education , thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the College Credit Plus recommendations in H.B. 49. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.