

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
HB 49
Testimony of Greg Shields
Campus President, Daymar College, Columbus
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Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos, I'm Greg Shields, Campus President of Daymar College, in Columbus. I am also an officer of the Ohio Association of Career Colleges and Schools. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about career education and the Ohio College Opportunity Grant – OCOG – and, specifically, how the grant helps students pursue in-demand occupations and contributes to the state's workforce development efforts.

First, I'd like to give you a little background on Daymar College. Daymar College has been preparing our graduates for the challenges of tomorrow's workplace and beyond for more than 50 years. In addition to our Columbus campus, Daymar College operates six branch campuses in Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as an online college, with a combined student population of approximately 1,800 men and women earning associate degrees and diplomas. We offer career-focused education in high-demand occupations, including health care, business, information technology, and criminal justice.

Our students are learning the foundations to a new career, branching out into the world as medical assistants, massage therapists, security personnel, correctional officers, crime scene technicians, managers, accountants, and business owners.

Daymar's students are like others pursuing career education and life-long opportunity, described in the testimony of Kent Trofholz, of the Ohio Association of Career Colleges and Schools. Most are older and working students. Almost all – 97% – of Daymar students receive some sort of financial aid, and many have loan obligations. On our Columbus campus, 156 students received financial aid last year. Significantly, two-thirds of them, or 106 students, received OCOG.

For each potential student, one of our financial services officer will package a variety of grants and scholarships. In fact, Daymar makes a substantial investment ourselves: last year, we provided \$1,149,099 in scholarship aid. Students make the decision whether or not to enroll based on pooling personal finances and financial aid. OCOG is the last, critical piece of this financial puzzle. Without this piece – without OCOG – a college education may be beyond their

reach, and they decide they can't afford to enroll. Or, alternatively, they have to incur higher debt to cover the gap between tuition and financial aid.

Thousands of career college students struggle to support themselves and their children. Many are overcoming family legacies of poverty and welfare. The Ohio College Opportunity Grant is an important resource that, when combined with other financial aid, makes it possible for Ohioans to realize their dreams to go to college, qualify for high-skilled jobs, and live up to their potential. Because many low-income students are forced to drop out, or suspend their education, when their bank accounts are low, even the relatively small OCOG grant serves not only as an incentive to enroll in college, but also helps students *stay enrolled and graduate*.

Since, in overwhelming numbers, our graduates work in Ohio, OCOG helps keep skilled workers right here in Ohio. Employers like Kroger, Message Envy and TSA have been among our most distinguished career partners, each hiring more than a half dozen graduates in the last year.

The Ohio College Opportunity Grant is a cost-effective tool to train or retrain Ohioans for local workforces that demand advanced skills. In fact, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce recognizes the value of OCOG and has made "enhanced funding for OCOG" one of its five education and workforce development goals for FY17-18.

As you are well aware, the vast majority of Ohio's projected job openings and new jobs of the future – nearly 60% by 2018 – will require some form of credential from education and training beyond high school. Meanwhile, Ohio's economic engine is idling because employers can't find qualified employees. Career colleges help close the skills gap that is holding Ohio back.

A look at the Ohio Means Jobs website shows thousands of job openings in the very occupations in which my students are preparing themselves – more than 100 openings each for human resource managers and computer network specialists, and more than 4,000 job openings in registered nursing.

These also happen to be well-paying occupations. Again according to Ohio Means Jobs, the median annual wage for human resource managers was \$93,920; for computer network specialists \$48,740, and RNs \$60,530. For these and other graduates, earning their credentials at a career college clearly pays off in better jobs, better incomes, and a better way of life for themselves and their families.

A hallmark of our educational sector is the close collaboration with local businesses to design training that is tailor-made to their needs. Because our schools are themselves part of the business community, we often introduce new programs quicker than other sectors of higher education. At the Daymar Columbus Campus, we hold program-specific advisory board meetings three times a year to gain the ever-changing knowledge from the community. Local employers enlighten us on what they are looking for in new hires and new advancements in their fields. The latest advice we received was that our students' technical skills are outstanding; however, their soft skills needed some fine-tuning. We now focus more on soft skills during the lab training and use role playing techniques to simulate future career situations.

Career colleges and schools are frequently the first place that employers turn to fill jobs because they know our students are well-trained and ready to hit the ground running. Daymar College is no exception. Here at the Daymar Columbus Campus, our most sought after program is our Medical Assisting Degree Program. Our medical assistants are challenged to participate in the Registered Medical Assistant Exam at the end of their program. They are trained to work in numerous different specialties in offices and hospitals, including: General Family Practice, Pediatrics, Cardiac, Trauma/Emergency Rooms, Podiatry, and many others. Our MAs are in high demand by the Mount Carmel Medical Group, currently employing four out of seven graduates so far this fiscal year. Our Medical Assisting program is currently sitting at a placement rate of 100%. All of our 2016-2017 MAs have all been placed in their chosen career field. We fully expect this demand for our graduates to continue with our current students.

In fact, 79% of *all* career college graduates are employed in their field within 90 days of graduation, according to the Ohio State Board of Career Colleges and Schools. As Daymar's experience with the Medical Assisting Degree Program shows, it's common for students to receive job offers *before* graduation, often following externships with local employers who witness the graduates' work ethic and skills in action.

Graduation is a key measurement of success for any college. Research using federal IPEDS data shows that, for more than a decade, degree-granting career colleges in Ohio have achieved higher graduation rates than public and community colleges (in 2015, 41% at career colleges versus 34% at public, four-year universities, and 17% at community colleges). While our sector continues to work to achieve a higher graduation rate, this performance is remarkable given the high percentage of non-traditional students we serve.

On behalf of all the OCOG recipients on Daymar's Columbus Campus and Ohio's 29,000 career college students pursuing degrees, I urge you to fund OCOG, as proposed in HB 49.

We are grateful that the Ohio General Assembly recognizes that financially qualified students deserve support to earn a degree, regardless of which institution they chose to attend. OCOG tuition assistance for financially needy career college students extends the ladder of prosperity for low-income adults, minorities and women, reduces multi-generational poverty, and builds Ohio's middle class. I urge members of the committee to support OCOG for career college students and help put highly trained career college graduates to work in jobs that are waiting to be filled now, right here in Ohio.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you have.