



Testimony to the House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee on HB49

March 23, 2017

Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos, members of the subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the behalf of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC). OAGC is concerned about some of the changes regarding College Credit Plus (CCP) in HB49, particularly with regard to new restrictions on student access to the program. Specifically, we are concerned with the following:

- The inability of parents to appeal to the state board of education any local school district decision to prohibit the student from participating in CCP after the deadline.
- New admission restrictions based on remediation-free standards, which could hamper some students' ability to access CCP.
- Restrictions on access to certain courses as determined by rules developed by the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE), when Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) already have full latitude to implement common-sense restrictions through prerequisites and program admission requirements.

Furthermore, the OAGC seeks to clarify existing ORC language that we believe has been misinterpreted and has thereby directs IHEs and districts to act counter to ORC § 3365. Despite inclusion within the CCP statute of "Option A," [ORC § 3365.06(A)] offering families the opportunity to self-pay CCP tuition, fees, and books, the ODHE deems courses paid for by families as "outside of CCP," forcing public IHEs to charge a higher, non-CCP tuition and stripping students of crucial components of the program, such as weighted grades and the application of the course toward graduation requirements. Families whose funding from the state is limited have no choice but to self-pay for courses in order to take full advantage of the program.

Additionally, we are concerned that while ORC stipulates that CCP courses must be nonsectarian, there was an oversight in failing to stipulate that CCP admission procedures and continuing enrollment requirements also be nonsectarian so that students are not subjected to religious discrimination. We are also troubled that the current rules developed for CCP prohibit students from taking more than 30 college credits per year, with a cumulative limit of 120 college credits. This unfairly penalizes 7th- and 8th-graders who are accessing CCP. Also, some college programs require more than 120 college credits.

Finally, we believe that there are not enough funds for nonpublic and homeschooled students to meet the demand for CCP courses. In addition, some public school students will be unable to afford CCP fees to private colleges and universities. Even students not meeting the threshold for free and reduced lunch may find it difficult to pay the ceiling amount per credit hour—especially if those students are taking multiple courses each semester.

OAGC recommends removal of the language in HB49 that rescinds the ability of parents to appeal to the state board of education a district decision on CCP participation and that which restricts access to courses. Short of removing course restrictions, we would recommend language that would allow a student to appeal any restriction to specific course access.

In addition, OAGC recommends that language be added to clarify that

- all participant-paid courses that fall under Option A shall follow all other Option B CCP procedures, including a requirement that the IHE charge the same rate normally charged to districts under Option B;
- all IHE CCP admission procedures and ongoing enrollment requirements be nonsectarian; and
- rules may not impose a cumulative limit on credits earned.

Finally, OAGC recommends that increased funds be allocated to ensure that all students have full access to CCP, including nonpublic students, homeschooled students, and public school students who wish to access private college CCP courses. OAGC remains opposed to charging students for CCP courses.

For any clarification in this testimony, please contact Ann Sheldon, OAGC Executive Director at 614-325-1185 or anngift@aol.com.