

***Matt Williams, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy,***

***KnowledgeWorks***

***March 2, 2017***

Chair Cupp, Ranking Member Miller, members of the House Finance Sub-Committee on Primary and Secondary Education, I am Matt Williams, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at KnowledgeWorks, a Cincinnati-based operating foundation, focused on advancing personalized and competency-based learning, that allow each student to reach and maximize their potential.

I am here today to testify in support of the broad contours of Governor Kasich's proposed FY 2018- 2019 education budget as contained in House Bill 49.

KnowledgeWorks believes that personalized and competency-based learning provides a significant opportunity for Ohio's children. Our ability to compete as a state—and for communities to attract growth industries and create jobs—demands a fresh approach to public education. The one-size-fits all philosophy of our past and too much of our present doesn't ensure our future economic and democratic success. Personalized, student-centered approaches to teaching and learning are on the rise in schools across Ohio.

For definitional purposes, KnowledgeWorks defines competency education by the following elements:

1. Students advance upon mastery, not seat time.
2. Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
3. Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
4. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
5. Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.<sup>1</sup>

We encourage Ohio's policymakers to continue to advance innovative practices, such as competency-based learning in the upcoming biennium budget. We were disappointed to not see competency-based learning included in the Governor's Budget Recommendations for fiscal years 2018-2019 as it was in the last biennium budget.

As a reminder, the 131<sup>st</sup> General Assembly created the Competency-Based Education Pilot in Amended Substitute House Bill 64, the FY 2016-2017 state operating budget, by providing \$2,000,000 for five sites

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrick, S. and Sturgis, C. Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills. *A CompetencyWorks Issue Brief*, International Association for K-12 Online Learning. (2013). [http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol\\_cw\\_issuebrief\\_building\\_mastery\\_final.pdf](http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol_cw_issuebrief_building_mastery_final.pdf)

to develop and administer competency-based education programs. Applicants included community schools, joint vocational school districts, STEM schools, traditional school districts and educational service center-led consortia. Each pilot site received \$200,000 per academic year for one planning and one implementation year. The pilot is currently in the first year of implementation.

The five pilot sites selected are:

1. Cincinnati City Schools
2. Chagrin Falls Exempted Village School District
3. Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County
4. Fairfield County Educational Service Center
5. Geauga County Educational Service Center

These pilots have breathed greater life into Ohio's personalized learning and education innovation investments by offering new opportunities to districts, schools, and, most importantly, students. This has also been an efficient, effective expenditure of tax-payer dollars. These pilots are currently impacting nearly 300 teachers, over 8300 students in over 70 schools in the state

By adding another \$2,000,000 into the 2018-2019 budget more schools and districts would be able to develop and implement new competency-based systems. This would be a positive step forward for the state of Ohio and its education innovation agenda.

This is a critical moment for the state of Ohio. We, as a state, have the potential to invest in the Straight A Fund as a bold way to build a system that can transform the way we educate our students in our state. KnowledgeWorks is supportive of a continued investment in the Straight A Fund. I would add one important caveat to this support. The Straight A Fund should be focused on the following priorities:

1. Scale up best practices from investments made in previous fiscal years.
2. Invest in and spreading personalized and competency-based learning models.
3. Invest in targeted, personalized professional development for educators in the state. Educator capacity is foundational to scaling these innovative approaches and we must give our educators the support they richly deserve.
4. Invest in networking vanguard districts, schools, and educators to further elevate best practices in innovative teaching and learning.

I will close with the following. U.S. News and World Report just released its first "best states" ranking. The heaviest weighted issues were for health care and education. Ohio did not fare well. Ohio's overall ranking is 35th. In education and the economy, Ohio ranked 38<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> respectively. As each of you well know, education and the economy are inextricable linked. We, as a state, must do better. What's more we must innovate our education systems, we must prepare each student for jobs that we've not yet created. That type of readiness will take schools that drive innovation, creativity, problem-solving,

and a new level of adaptability and nimbleness. Investments in education innovation will directly, albeit over time, pay dividends for the state's economy and thus its future.

KnowledgeWorks stands ready to help with this effort in any appropriate way possible.

Finally, I want to thank you and applaud your leadership and the leadership of Governor Kasich and State Superintendent DeMaria on this important opportunity to transform Ohio's education system.