

**Testimony before the Senate Finance Subcommittee on
Higher Education on House Bill 49**

Dr. Kathy Krendl, President

Otterbein University

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Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Williams, and members of the Subcommittee, I am Dr. Kathy Krendl, President of Otterbein University. Otterbein University is a four year private university with an enrollment of just under 3,000. We are a college of opportunity, committed to providing our students with a transformative, experiential (hands-on) education. Nearly 30% of our undergraduates are federal Pell grant recipients; 17% are students of color. Otterbein has successfully challenged the national narrative on the success of underserved populations: our students of color have a first-year retention rate that is higher than the class as a whole. I am here to talk about our College Credit Plus program and the proposed changes under House Bill 49.

Otterbein has over 66 students taking 95 classes through our College Credit Plus program on our campus. When it comes to teaching in the schools, we offer a single class in three Columbus City Schools.

As you have heard previously, the House-passed version of House Bill 49 removed the executive budget language that would have reinstated the \$40 floor. By removing the minimum price, the language has caused a race to the bottom. Sadly, it appears partnering with high schools is no longer about fit for a student or providing students with a variety of options but it is about what option is the cheapest. Now, I understand the high school's

frustration but to assume our colleges should just give away college credit will only lead to one path: government pushing out the private sector.

The conversation around the cost of textbooks has been an important one during this year's budget process. At Otterbein we are committed to providing an affordable, high-quality education. We haven't raised tuition in four years, in part because we don't control costs on items like textbooks.

To place an arbitrary cost-mandate on our institutions regarding textbooks assumes that we control the costs of these goods. We do not set the market price for textbooks and are always looking at ways to improve affordability to accessibility on our campus. However, this provision will force us to take a hard look at continuing the program. I cannot put the viability of our institution on the line for College Credit Plus.

The unfunded mandates on colleges do not stop there. As you have heard in other testimony, the Department of Higher Education is now forcing all post-secondary institutions to pay for any student to take the ACT or SAT, even if the student has no interest in actually attending Otterbein. There is no mechanism for universities to pay ACT or the College Board for individual student tests, and since the student owns their test score, not the University, there is no guarantee we would ever even see the score. It is untenable to expect universities to operate under these conditions.

One last point I want to mention on College Credit Plus is not addressed in the budget but it is one of the largest concerns by all

higher education and K-12. There is absolutely no payment schedule adhered to by the Ohio Department of Education. Our institutions have no idea when we will get paid for offering CCP. Many times, the payment is over a year late. K-12 has no idea when the money will be taken from their accounts. When money is transferred, it is transferred in partial payments by direct deposit with no paperwork. It is an auditing nightmare. There should be a payment structure to give all participants predictability. This would not require any monetary investment from the state but just set forth clear guidelines in statute so the Ohio Department of Education can be held accountable for actually paying the money it owes.

As with my colleague before me, I also want to stress the importance of the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. At Otterbein a little under 20 percent of our undergraduate class receives an OCOG grant. This past school year 410 students were eligible for the award with the average award of \$2,373. This is real money directly to students to help pay for tuition. I ask this body to really think about where you want to set priorities in this budget. I know that the House and Senate are looking for areas to cut. However, this is one area where a small investment now will pay off over a lifetime for both the student and the state.

Thank you again for allowing me to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.