

House Bill 2 Written Proponent Testimony
House Economic & Workforce Development Committee, May 22, 2019

Chair Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobeki and members of the House Economic & Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 2.

At the Cincinnati Chamber, we focus on growing the vibrancy and economic prosperity of our region. One of the three pillars of our work is to expand the talent base. Simply put, jobs follow talent. So we are committed to expanding the region's talent base by attracting new residents to fill available jobs, increasing the number of college degrees earned in our region, and finding new ways to connect employers to skilled workers.

House Bill 2 will help us advance these regional priorities in a few ways. Our Chamber has an entire team dedicated to our talent work. Recently, the team launched a new program called Apprenti Cincinnati, an innovative, non-traditional solution to drive more tech talent in and to the Cincinnati region through registered apprenticeships. Apprenti is an industry recognized, state and federally accredited program that trains future tech workers with an emphasis on underrepresented groups including women, minorities and veterans. The program is designed to recruit and train professionals based on their aptitude, not their background. Prior to classroom training, candidates are selected by local employers, such as Kroger Technology and Great American Insurance Group. This allows candidates to have their coursework paid for by their employer, followed by individual training within their workplace. The TechCred component of House Bill 2 would offset some of the upfront costs incurred by participating employers by reimbursing a portion of the training expenses. We believe this can help catalyze business participation in Apprenti Cincinnati and expand the number of participants to greater levels as we bring the program to scale.

The Chamber also leads a Work-Based Learning program, a partnership between local school districts and local employers. This program is designed to create full-time employment opportunities for high school students upon graduation by pairing hands-on industry experience with classroom learning. Participating employers work with our students to accelerate the training process through part-time work. Students gain on-site industry experience two days a week and study a corresponding curriculum three days a week. The typical program duration is 16 weeks. Employers are encouraged to make full-time offers upon graduation. With potential funding from Industry Sector Partnerships, we may have new access to funds that would allow for further development of the program, such as finding ways to incorporate credential training for students or addressing related challenges like transportation.

And while we do not have a specific program that aligns with the individual microcredential assistance program in HB 2, we do believe this represents another valuable state investment into the higher education and workforce development ecosystem. We support efforts to increase the pathways individuals can use to upskill and make themselves more competitive in our rapidly changing economy.

House Bill 2 is an exciting proposal that we would greatly appreciate becoming a reality. We appreciate the Administration and General Assembly for making this a priority and wish to thank the sponsors, Representatives Cross and Lepore-Hagan, for their work and dedication. Please reach out to me at 513.579.3120 or keagan@cincinnati-chamber.com if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued commitment to the success of our region.

Sincerely,



Katie Eagan
Vice President, Government Affairs