



*BEFORE THE HOUSE ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2019*

Chair Zeltwanger, Vice Chair Powell, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute House Bill 2. My name is Kevin Boehner and I am the Director of Small Business and Workforce Policy for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

The Ohio Chamber is the state's leading business advocate, and we represent nearly 8,000 companies, of all sizes, that do business in Ohio. Consistently, we hear from our members that they are struggling to fill workforce shortages, as well as find qualified, skilled employees for the openings that they have.

We believe that Sub HB 2 and the program contained within, the TechCred Program, will assist employers with filling those vacancies as well as "upskilling" their existing workforce. Some of the key components to the sub-bill that we are supportive of are the following:

- Expands the definition of "microcredential" to mean an industry-recognized credential or certificate that an individual may complete in one year or less.
- Allows for an open enrollment period for employers to apply for the grant program.
- Removes the wage requirement that was included in the as-introduced version of the bill but does allow for employers to include potential wage increases in their application.
- Expands the list of organizations that may be members of an industry sector partnership to further the shared goal of meeting the industry cluster's human resources needs.

The process laid out in the sub-bill as it relates to open enrollment periods will allow for more competitiveness for these grants, something that our members mentioned was lacking in previous programs. Additionally, we are in support of the removal of the wage increase requirement as a component to this program but do believe that having it as an optional part of the application and something to be considered while awarding grants is a positive change.

However, there is one portion of the sub-bill that we do want to take a further look at as we move forward. This provision prohibits an employer from requiring a prospective or current employee to accept or stay in employment with the employer upon completion of the program. That,

coupled with the limit on the grant total going from \$5,000 to a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$2,000, could potentially leave employers footing the bill outside of what they receive back from the state.

The second point that we want to spotlight is the funding of this program. As you may recall, there was funding for this program included in the "As-Introduced" version of the state's main operating budget. We would prefer to see the funding for Sub HB 2 (TechCred Program) come through that process or through already existing workforce grant dollars as opposed to standalone legislation that would require an additional expenditure.

Although we have some concerns with a few provisions, we do overall support Substitute House Bill 2 and request that the bill be favorably reported. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.