



May 21, 2019

TO: The Ohio Senate, Senate Finance Committee
FROM: John T. Smith, Director, Southern State Community College Truck Driving Academy
RE: Written Testimony Concerning the Revolving Loan Fund

Chairman Dolan and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

As a Director of the Truck Driving Academy at Southern State Community College, I work directly with student's everyday pursuing a career in driving a semi-truck. I have spent my entire life around semi-trucks. My father drove for over 44 years and I spent the majority of my childhood riding in an old milk truck. When I turned 18, I received my license and drove for the next 31 years. I retired from driving seven years ago with a little over 4 million miles from behind the wheel. I then started my second career as an instructor at Southern State Community College and the Truck Driving Academy.

Southern State Community Colleges' Truck Driving Academy trains over 250 students a year. These are the drivers that are driving right beside you on Interstate 70, 71, and 75, and across the entire county. The Revolving Loan Fund is a big part of the training success because it provides a funding source for students that has not been there before. Before the Revolving Loan Fund was around, students either had to pay cash, which 95% could not find that as an option, go to their local county for possible funding, or Sallie Mae which had above average interest rates. On average, prior to the Revolving Loan Fund, we would receive 10 calls a day about interest in the program, but when reviewing their funding options, eight would not be able to consider any of the options viable for their income at that time. When the Revolving Loan became a reality as a funding source, we could meet all the funding needs for our students and overcome the vast majority of their hurdles to overcome.

As the need for truck driver's increase throughout the nation, the need for programs that mirror the Revolving Loan is imperative. All students wanting a better future should be able to obtain the training needed for employment in this growing economy. This program benefits all industries, all demographics, and all types of financial need. This is a program that has only just started to take off and the impact it could have Ohioans is endless.

I thank you for taking the time to review my testimony and for considering its value as it relates to future funding that is accessible to the institutions and the students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John T. Smith".

John T. Smith
Director, Truck Driving Academy