



STEM Entrepreneurship & Innovation Program for Students to Help Develop Ohio's Future Workforce

Popularly Known as the “*Believe in Ohio Student STEM Innovation & Scholarship Program*”

Mr. Chairman, Madame Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee. I am here today to provide testimony in support of Amendment HC0880X1 to House Bill 110, which continues funding of the Believe in Ohio STEM Innovation and Scholarship program.

Hello, my name is Michael Woytek and I am the Executive Director for The Ohio Academy of Science and the Co-Director of the Believe in Ohio program. I would like to share more about the Believe in Ohio program and its role in advancing innovation, investment, and economic prosperity in Ohio.

If the purpose of education is to prepare students for life, Believe in Ohio's mission is to increase their engagement in the learning process through STEM and entrepreneurship. Through comprehensive, curriculum-based resources and instruction, we challenge students to apply what they're being taught and to solve problems and innovate solutions by developing new products or services or problem solutions with a STEM Commercialization Plan or STEM Business Plan. Believe in Ohio instills confidence and provides students with a sense of purpose and direction for planning post-secondary education and establishing career goals. It emphasizes the importance of STEM and an entrepreneurial mindset to compete in today's Innovation Economy.

Believe in Ohio has developed innovative training and professional development for Ohio's teachers and has redesigned curriculum and instruction that can be delivered in any learning environment. These resources, along with the support of regional STEM advocates, are available to every Ohio classroom, including an emphasis on serving isolated rural and urban districts. Additionally, the proposed funding will develop a mentorship network for these students.

Students are provided the opportunity to compete for scholarships to Ohio colleges and universities on the basis of their innovative ideas. The Believe in Ohio STEM Innovation Scholarship program recognizes students from each Ohio House (99) and Senate District (33). The Believe in Ohio program also serves as springboard for important legacy programs and initiatives of the Department of Higher Education (Choose Ohio First).

This spring more than 100 students will compete for more than \$300,000 in scholarships to attend Ohio's colleges and universities in Believe in Ohio's Regional and State Competition. There are some incredible projects that we will be sharing with you. They include development of an advanced photonic integrated circuit that can revolutionize computational power, a multipurpose shelter to aid in humanitarian relief efforts, a cohesive AI process device to detect bacteria in water supplies, and one incredible agriscience and sustainability project to improve environmental impact that you will hear about shortly.

Believe in Ohio creates a pipeline of entrepreneurial minded STEM talent to address jobs that don't even exist or industry's that have yet to be developed.

Believe in Ohio builds a pathway to Ohio college STEM degrees and the needs of industry to grow Ohio's Innovation Economy.

I urge you to support this Amendment to H.B. 110.