



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**Testimony of President Kristina M. Johnson, PhD
The Ohio State University
before the Ohio House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee
April 5, 2022**

Chair Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Ohio House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 514, the Graduating and Retaining Ohio's Workforce (GROW) Act. In December, I was proud to stand alongside Representative Jon Cross, my counterparts in higher education and members of the state's business community for the bill's unveiling. Today, I am pleased to convey the enthusiastic support of The Ohio State University for this legislation, which will help attract and retain graduates from post-secondary institutions in our state.

I thank Representative Cross and Representative Sedrick Denson for introducing this important measure. The higher education sector in Ohio is fortunate to have such champions of our work in the General Assembly, and we are grateful for this body's unwavering focus on enabling our state's people, businesses and communities to realize their full potential.

Ohio's colleges, universities and career-technical education centers draw individuals from all walks of life and across the country. In 2020, we attracted over 11,300 more new, first-year college students to our state than we sent off to others, ranking Ohio as the 4th best in the nation. Yet, we rank in the bottom third of states in terms of the number of our residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The state has made strides in recent years bridging this gap, and House Bill 514 provides crucial tools to keep even more of our graduates in Ohio to fuel our economy and enliven our communities. It also advances long-standing collaboration between the State of Ohio, post-secondary institutions and private businesses.

From the perspective of the state's land-grant, flagship university, these partnerships have never been more fruitful. Together, we are fostering a thriving ecosystem of pioneering scholarship and entrepreneurship in the Ohio State Innovation District. We are reducing friction in the technology commercialization process through Ohio's I-P Promise. And we are helping people throughout Ohio seize opportunity — from landing a new job in an emerging industry to launching, growing and attracting businesses throughout our state.

In November, I announced Ohio State's new Scarlet & Gray Advantage program, which will provide undergraduate students pathways to earn their degrees without taking on debt. Paid internships and work opportunities, like the ones incentivized by this bill, are foundational to the

success of this program and of our graduates. Enhanced state-based student financial aid is also a building block of the initiative. Expanding eligibility for the Ohio College Opportunity Grant to associate degree holders who wish to further their education will help keep our workforce flexible in the face of an ever-changing world.

Together, these measures can catalyze a new level of dynamism in Ohio's economy. As you know, the eyes of the world were recently on Ohio with the announcement that Intel would invest \$20 billion here to create two new leading-edge semiconductor factories. One of the key reasons Intel chose Ohio was because of our excellent public colleges and universities and the many brilliant students we educate. The initial talent needs alone include 3,000 high-tech jobs across STEM fields with half of those jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or higher. The Grow Act will help retain the students we educate for the jobs we need.

As Chancellor Gardner noted in his testimony on House Bill 110, the FY'22-'23 state operating budget, a 5% increase in educational attainment in Ohio brings a net fiscal benefit of \$500 million per year to the state. As we retain more of the graduates our higher education institutions educate and train, we will increase both the size and expertise of our workforce. With less student debt, they will be more financially free to pursue their bold ideas, start businesses and invest in their communities. House Bill 514 provides pivotal tools in this collective effort.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued work on behalf of Ohio. Our higher education system is among the best in the nation. With your support of the GROW Act, we can do even more to translate this vast educational enterprise into a highly skilled workforce, whose talents and ambition fuel prosperity for themselves and the entire Buckeye State.