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Written Testimony on House Bill 514  
House Higher Education & Career Readiness Committee  
President Neville G. Pinto, University of Cincinnati  
April 5, 2022

Chair Lanese, Vice Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide written testimony today in support of House Bill 514 on behalf of the University of Cincinnati.

The University of Cincinnati serves over 46,000 students across 14 colleges and 414 areas of discipline. We are leading public urban universities into a new era of innovation and impact. Our faculty, staff, and students are saving lives, creating opportunities, advancing knowledge, changing outcomes and shaping the direction of our city, region and state.

The University of Cincinnati has ambitious and bold growth goals to achieve greater impact, especially given the Learning Economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tied to our identity as an urban-based, Carnegie Research 1 university. Our university-wide approach includes growth in enrollment, research funding, innovation and entrepreneurship, and clinical capability. UC's strategic direction, **Next Lives Here**, is the blueprint—aimed at substantially increasing our impact by attracting and retaining exceptional talent to the university and region, and graduating a growing talent pool to meet Ohio's workforce needs and grow its economy.

One of our most important metrics, our six-year graduation rate, is 72.8%, according to our preliminary figures. This is an increase from our previous record of 71.6% last year. Nearly 97% of our 2018-19 graduates are employed or continuing their education, and 86% of our April graduates report excellent or good satisfaction with their UC experience.

The University of Cincinnati works toward greater national prominence and to be recognized among the top 25 public research universities nationally; to lead in research that improves people's lives, to invest in success by recruiting and retaining top talent, creating an innovative research infrastructure, and cultivating growth of programs of excellence. We will solve problems that matter and prepare UC's students for Ohio's workforce needs.

Talent is the currency of economic development. National and state demographic trends, the ongoing labor shortage, and an economy in transition all make talent the most sought-after resource for sustainable economic growth. We consistently hear from companies that their greatest challenge is finding the skilled talent they need to fill job openings.

This challenge is why UC is leading initiatives like the Cincinnati Innovation District (CID). The CID attracts, produces, retains and develops talent by co-locating and collaborating with organizations. The CID received a \$100 million seed investment from JobsOhio to accelerate STEM graduates by 15,000; increase total research by \$2 billion; and create 20,000 new knowledge jobs and \$3 billion of economic activity by 2030.

These investments are crucial to meet the increasing demand for talent. We see House Bill 514 as a natural extension of this same investment. The GROW Ohio Act provides more scholarships, increases out-of-state student attraction, creates more incentives for companies to offer internships, and entices more students to make their careers here in Ohio. Each of these policies creates stronger connections for talent that is trained in Ohio to stay in Ohio.

As the institution that invented cooperative education, we are particularly proud of the experience-based learning that is a hallmark of a UC education. Additional support for internships and co-ops is crucial because of the multiple benefits they provide. First, it creates a direct connection between employers and students, which then becomes a deep talent pool for companies. Second, it shows students what kinds of opportunities there are to work in some of the most advanced, competitive companies in the world. Third, it takes education out of the classroom and into the workplace, as students apply the knowledge they learn on our campus on real-world scenarios and experiences.

We can and must do more collectively in Ohio to build the workforce pipelines of the future. We applaud Representatives Cross and Denson for their efforts to build a policy that connects higher education, business and economic development together. This kind of collaboration is exactly what we need to address an issue of this scale. We urge the members of this committee to support the GROW Ohio Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We always appreciate the partnership of legislators to make Ohio's future brighter and more prosperous.

Sincerely,



Neville G. Pinto  
President, University of Cincinnati