



*BEFORE THE HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER READINESS COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 514
TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022*

Chair Lanese, Vice-Chair Young, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 514, also known as the GROW Act. My name is Steve Stivers and I serve as the President and CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

First, we would be remiss if we did not say thank you to the bill sponsors, Representative Jon Cross and Representative Sedrick Denson, for bringing forth this important piece of legislation. The creative and innovative approach taken with this bill will undoubtedly help Ohio attract and retain the talent necessary to help our state move forward.

As the state's leading business advocate, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce aggressively champions free enterprise, economic competitiveness and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans. One of the major issues facing Ohio employers is the issue of workforce development and retention. We believe the approach taken in House Bill 514 will assist Ohio businesses as they seek to attract more employees as well as keep more of their talent.

There are four major portions of this bill that I would like to highlight, and they are as follows:

- Students who graduate from an Ohio college or university will have no income tax after graduation for three years.
- Give businesses a refundable credit equal to 30% of wages for providing paid internships/co-ops.
- Creates a merit-based scholarship program for in-state and out-of-state students to attend college in Ohio.
- Provide an additional supplement OCOG payment to students who return to an institution after completing their associate in the state.

The economy keeps changing and the need for higher skilled workers has never been greater. We believe that each of these initiatives will incentivize more students – both in-state and out-of-state – to attend higher education institutions in Ohio. While the need for higher skilled workers has never been greater, the need to attract and retain employees has also never been greater. The piece of this bill regarding incentives for internships seeks to help develop the workforce of the future.

If Ohio wants to remain competitive and continue to see large investments in our state, it is imperative that we take a laser focus on developing a strong talent pool for employers. We know that there have been upwards of 3.5 million people who have ties to Ohio – in terms of them having been born here or went to

school here – but do not live here anymore. Initiatives such as House Bill 514 will start to close that gap and keep more people here in our state following graduation from any of our outstanding institutions of higher education.

While we know that workforce development is a huge issue facing employers, likewise we know that House Bill 514 is not a silver bullet to solve this issue. It is going to take more approaches like this bill in order to solve the shortage of higher skilled individuals that all employers are having to face every single day.

Chair Lanese and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 514. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.