



*BEFORE THE HOUSE PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 178*

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 178. My name is Rick Carfagna, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

As you may know, for 129 years, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

One of the most consistent themes we hear from our member companies, across nearly every sector of Ohio's economy, is difficulty finding workforce talent to address operational needs. We want to thank the sponsor of the legislation, Senator Reineke, for his work in drafting this bill. As he rightly points out, a key component in addressing Ohio's workforce needs now and into the future includes a focus on ensuring our K-12 education system prepares students for postsecondary education, career and technical school programs, workforce skills training, and other opportunities that will help to enhance their success in life beyond high school.

In the Chamber's recent publication, *Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future*, we highlight the need to address workforce challenges Ohio may experience in the coming years absent thoughtful leadership. In partnership with Accenture, our study demonstrates the importance of connecting educational experiences with the opportunities available to students in current in-demand fields, and those expected to emerge thanks to the recent announcements by Intel, Honda and others.

We support SB 178 due to our belief that a greater emphasis must be placed on ensuring accountability for Ohio's education system and career readiness for Ohio's students, making for brighter futures for younger Ohioans and encouraging more of them to remain in and build their lives here in Ohio. Through the creation of a statewide agency directly accountable to elected officials, we believe Ohio's future will remain bright.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this legislation. We look forward to working with all of you to enhance Ohio's education system to prepare for the economic opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.