



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*”

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee. I am offering this written testimony in support of Amendment SC2521X1 to Substitute House Bill 110, “STEM Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program for Students to Help Develop Ohio's Future Workforce”, which continues funding of what is more popularly known as the “Believe in Ohio Student STEM Innovation and Scholarship Program”.

My name is Sara Rothkegel. I am a business teacher at Westlake High School, where I have been involving my Entrepreneurship students in the Believe in Ohio program for the past 4 years. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about my support for the Believe in Ohio program.

The Believe in Ohio program provides many benefits for students, teachers, and the citizens of the state of Ohio. For the students, the chance to see what it would really take to start and operate a business is beneficial. Students spend months, using a variety of people and resources, to develop their plans. This is not just a simple “pitch competition.” Students also benefit from the competitive aspect, knowing there is potential for prize money and scholarships. Having something that is not just for a grade is motivating to them. Students also gain a sense of confidence in themselves when they see the plan through from idea to multiple page document and financial spreadsheet.

For teachers, Believe in Ohio is free and provides a comprehensive curriculum to assist in implementing the program. It also encourages teachers to collaborate with the business community to facilitate the judging at the local level. The community connections can benefit the students, as it allows the business leaders to see what high schoolers are doing, and potentially opens doors for future job opportunities.

The citizens of the state of Ohio benefit by the best and brightest of the competition having incentive to stay in Ohio because of the scholarship program. The guest speakers provided at the STEM Innovation forums show students that there are innovative business leaders in the state of Ohio.

This program has allowed me to make Entrepreneurship as real-world based and exciting to students as it possibly could be. I have been grateful to be a part of Believe in Ohio for the past four years and hope it is able to continue and grow from here.

On behalf of the students in our state, I urge you to support Amendment SC2521X1 to Substitute House Bill 110 that continues funding of the Believe in Ohio Program.

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