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## **STEM Entrepreneurship & Innovation Program for Students to Help Develop Ohio's Future Workforce -AMENDMENT SC2521X1**

Popularly Known as the “*Believe in Ohio* Student STEM Innovation & Scholarship Program”

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance 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 Jon Kozesky and I am the Executive Director of several Chambers of Commerce in Northeast Ohio. Having seen how the Believe in Ohio program actually works, how it marries education with the private sector and positively impacts students and employers, I can say that I am an advocate of this program and hope you will be as well.

The Believe in Ohio program exists to help create and nurture a culture of innovation for Ohio students and to encourage students to continue their path to a rewarding and lucrative career in science, engineering, mathematics and technology by providing scholarships to Ohio colleges, universities, post-secondary career centers and vocational schools. My clients in the private sector are desperately seeking young Ohioans for high paying jobs, and need this pipeline from high school to college to employment to help them survive in the global economy.

Amendment SC2521X1 to Sub. H. B. 110, will continue the funding for this essential program in the amount of \$1.495 million for each year of the biennium. I strongly urge you to incorporate this into the budget bill and keep this program. When you talk about Ohio's economy, the need for STEM education and scholarships is essential for our present and future prosperity.

The Believe in Ohio program has touched over 50 Ohio counties, has inspired students from over 180 schools, and has had an impact on over 400 teachers since its fruition. The program has provided a whopping \$1.6 million overall in awards/scholarships and has contributed to tangible positive change for Ohio students' lives. On behalf of the small business employer community of our state I urge you to support Amendment SC2521X1 to Sub H. B. 110. Thank you for your time and thank you for looking ahead to our bright future.