



**Senator Sandra Williams
21st Ohio Senate District**

**Senate Bill 66 Sponsor Testimony
Workforce and Higher Education Committee
March 10, 2021**

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 66 (SB 66).

The purpose of SB 66 is to establish a career pathways apprenticeship program similar to the CareerWise Colorado program. The bill permits the Department of Education in conjunction with the Department of Higher Education, and the state workforce development board to create and administer the career pathways apprenticeship program for high school students in the State of Ohio.

The goal of this legislation is to provide high school students with the opportunity to earn free college credit, receive a nationally-recognized industry certification, and earn a wage while gaining meaningful work experience. The program will establish partnerships between schools, businesses, communities, local government entities, and nonprofit organizations to create career pathways for apprenticeships in manufacturing, information technology, financial services, business operations, healthcare, and education.

According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, the United States is expected this year to face a shortage of 5 million workers who are equipped with technical certificates and credentials¹. Last year, a constituent in my district who is also a retiree received a letter from the National Electrical Benefit Fund (NEBF) due to the shortage of electrical workers in certain areas of the country. As a result, the Trustees of NEBF and the National Employers Benefit Board approved a temporary Return to Work Amendment to the Plan of Benefits for the NEBF for the calendar year 2020.

In a report released by the United States Chamber of Commerce, skills trades such as Electricians, Carpenters, Plumbers and Masons have been in the number one spot when it comes to vacancies.² Thus, it is important that career programs are available to not only provide students with various career options, but to also close the immense gap between skilled workers and the workforce. Through apprenticeship programs students can receive practical on-the-job training in a variety of industries while simultaneously gaining the requisite skills and knowledge needed to succeed in today's growing workforce.

¹ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020/>

² https://www.uschamber.com/sites/default/files/q2_2018_cci_final.pdf

Upon completion of apprenticeship students will gain valuable workforce experience, which will equip them with the skills needed to thrive in all aspects of their career. Implementing a career pathways program can provide high school students with array of career options. Furthermore, according to research work-based learning can increase student engagement, attendance, graduation rates and college-credit attainment.

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, and members of the committee, this concludes my testimony and I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.