

Senate Bill 135 Testimony  
Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee  
May 19, 2021

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Willaims and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Commiittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Dr. Doreen Larson, President of Edison State Community College serving the counties of Miami, Shelby, Darke and Preble in Ohio.

Over the past year, Edison State had the distinction among Ohio colleges of growing enrollment and increasing our share of the state higher education subsidy. A major factor in the success of our college is our tight relationship and resource sharing with the high schools in our service area.

I am here today to speak briefly in support of Senate Bill 135.

In particular, Senate Bill 135 underscores the need for dissemination of clear and timely information on career pathways by High School Counselors. This is a tough, but critical element to shifting the culture of higher education goals and attainment that underpins a sustained economic recovery.

At Edison State, we experience an uphill battle with high school counselors who continue to emphasize enrollment at a 4-year college as a major sign of success for the student and their families. Currently, our strategy is to connect directly with parents by offering a 100% tuition waiver if a current high school graduate enrolls with Edison State directly from high school.

However, the feature in the Senate Bill 135 that addresses overall high school guidance is bold step that will result a major change over time and across the state of Ohio as a whole.

In addition to the overwhelming workload experienced by high school counselors, there is a hesitancy by them to steer students toward jobs in the trades as well as a perception that not all credits from two-year colleges will transfer to four-year programs.

The OACC, Edison State, and other community colleges can readily provide the data on positive career and earnings outcomes of completing a 2-year degree and even a short-term credential. We can couple that information with demonstrating the significant savings in tuition cost and accelerated entry into the workforce. Senate Bill 135 can help us to get that information gathered, documented and into the hands of counselors.

This is not to suggest that all high school guidance counselors are not committed to providing the pathways that will serve their students' needs. Chairman Johnson, if you would indulge me, I would like to read the following brief testimony from Rebecca Curtis who is a high school guidance counselor at Greenville High School. Ms. Curtis, who was unable to be here today, works closely with Edison State and understands the importance of providing comprehensive information on postsecondary pathways to their high school student.

*"My name is Rebecca Curtis and I have been in a school counseling role for 22 years. A very powerful movement has taken place over the last 8 years at Greenville High School in our enhanced partnership with Edison State Community College. The platform is simple yet so powerful, provide direct services to career planning within the high school setting for graduating seniors and current College Credit Plus Students.*

*At GHS an Edison advisor is one site one day a week to work in coordination with the guidance department to streamline this process for students. Without direct guidance students simply don't understand all the avenues that are available to them, and the job cannot be done as two separate identities. We would love to share our model with others who want to build that bridge and help all students meet their goals of entering the workforce, enrolling in a certificate or trade program, obtaining a two-year degree, completing the transfer model, or enrolling at the four-year university. The model must provide support for enrollment, financing, and workforce connections to meet the diverse need of all students. When we come together as a community in making sure we address the 12plus need for our young adults our workforce and local economy will soar."*

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your ongoing support of higher education. I am proud of the legacy in Ohio of support for higher education access and success.