



Rick Carfagna, Senior Vice President
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Proponent Testimony - Senate Bill 1
March 28, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairman Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and Members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 1. My name is Rick Carfagna, and I am the Senior 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 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, as well as Representatives Jones and Dobos, sponsors of the companion bill House Bill 12, for their work on this important issue. As these legislators have rightly pointed out, Ohio's workforce both now, and in the future, hinges on a K-12 education system that 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.

Instead, Ohio's scores in recent national publications such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress show a worrying trend, in which Ohio's students are achieving proficiency in math and reading at much lower rates than just a few short years ago. While COVID-19 had a tremendous operational impact on our schools, those trends predate 2020. These scores highlight the need for the legislature to ensure that our education system upholds its responsibilities in the preparation of our young people to find personal fulfillment and reach their individual potentials.

The 2021 Ohio's Remediation Report, produced by the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Higher Education, also illustrates preparedness issues among high school graduates. As of 2020, the percentage of Ohio public high school graduates attending an Ohio public college or university and needing remediation in math or English was 19.3%. For Ohio adults over age 25 enrolling in postsecondary education for the first time, the overall remediation in 2020 was even higher at 24.87%.

In the Chamber's recent publication, *Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future*, we highlight the need to address workforce challenges that 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, Ford, Abbott, and others. Because this issue is so critical to our state's business community, this legislation is one of our top policy priorities for the 135th Ohio General Assembly.

In the same way that we support House Bill 12, we stand here today in favor of Senate Bill 1 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. By making these structural changes, we believe Ohio can better equip our youth with the skill sets necessary for jobs in the coming decade that have yet to be invented.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 1. We stand ready to work with all of you to enhance Ohio's education system, and I welcome any questions from the committee.