



**Ohio House Finance Committee
State Operating Budget (HB 33)
April 20, 2023**

**Testimony of Liz Jensen, Fairmont Career Tech Center/Kettering City Schools
President, Ohio Association of Comprehensive and Compact Career-Technical Schools**

My name is Liz Jensen, Principal of the Fairmont Career Tech Center as well as Director of the Centerville-Kettering-Oakwood Compact in the southwest region of our state. Our compact is composed of 3 districts which are academically successful while also priding themselves on simultaneously providing career education to best prepare our students for their lives beyond graduation.

Kettering Fairmont High School within our compact has experienced great growth as well as increasing demand for our career technical programs. The Kettering City Schools, through the generosity of our taxpayers, has been able to expend over \$5.5 million in the last several years to expand our career center's programming. We now offer 14 programs to serve our high school's 2400 students and have grown our capacity to proudly serve 50% of all the high school's juniors and seniors. Despite our district's growth and financial investment in career tech, more growth is needed as 70% of our sophomore class applied for acceptance into a career tech program for next school year. Meeting the needs of the over 100 waitlisted students who we currently do not have the capacity to serve must be addressed to best prepare them for the future. When this growth in career tech can occur, however, is the question as all traditional school districts are faced with funding all aspects of education, PreK-12, as well as being mindful of the taxes assessed to our communities.

The governor's proposed \$200 million in career tech expansion grants could be the answer to Kettering, and many other districts across the state, providing more students with the immense advantages offered through career technical education. In analyzing both student interest data as well as local industry needs, Kettering Fairmont is submitting a grant proposal for a new Advanced Manufacturing program. Our proposal involves expanding the existing Engineering lab, which was built in the 1970's and does not meet modern ADA requirements, to include a modern lab space which would be shared by Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing to mimic the relationship between these career fields in industry. With over 50% of our waitlisted students requesting a skilled trade as their first choice and many advanced manufacturing companies pledging not just their support but also a guarantee they will employ our students, we are confident that the 60 new seats created by this program will be a great win for both our district and our community. When this beneficial program could be started without assistance from the governor's proposed \$200 million in grant funding is the question.

Ohio is making great strides to grow our economy, with career technical education contributing to that effort through growing and retaining our own talent. Our state is known as a leader in career tech as well as an exemplar in our nation of a state who is “getting it right”. I strongly urge you to restore the governor’s proposed \$200 million for Career Technical Construction Program funding to help Ohio’s workforce through investing in the most important asset of our state - our youth.

Thank you for your time, again I ask you to fully restore the Career Technical Construction Program to the *As Introduced* version. I am willing to answer any questions you might have regarding Kettering-Fairmont, career-technical education, and the need for CTE building expansion.