

Testimony on H.B 312
Ohio House Finance Committee
June 20, 2024

Chair Edwards, Vice-Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and distinguished members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on the proposed regional partnership legislation, HB312.

I am Colin Groth, Chief Advancement Officer for StriveTogether --a national organization focused on helping communities across the country to build a strong civic infrastructure in order to support positive academic and economic outcomes for every child. Indeed, one of our VERY ambitious goals is to help communities across the United States move 4,000,000 children out of poverty.

Civic infrastructure connects people, ideas and resources within a community to achieve measurable improvements in shared community goals— and these connections can be ignited for lasting change, as is evidenced through the work of some of your Ohio network members such as Learn to Earn Dayton (Dayton) and the Summit Educational Initiative (Akron). Two organizations that are leaders and exemplars within our network of more than 70 Place-based Partnerships in 28 states.

Over the past decade, StriveTogether has worked with employers, educators, non-profits and policy makers to create strong working relationships between and among a wide range of strategic partners who are focused on enhancing social and intellectual capital outcomes. We applaud the state of Ohio for being aggressive in developing, attracting and retaining the “next generation” jobs that will enhance the economic vitality of our communities and encourage state policy makers to continue to support and invest in developing the next generation of intellectual and talent capital in the state to ensure a world class talent pipeline.

As you know, organizations such as the Lumina Foundation have ranked Ohio 34th nationally in intellectual capital measured through college attainment rates. Many states across the country are trying to move the needle on academic outcomes and StriveTogether has helped partners in states like Tennessee and Texas as they attempt to use data to leverage and align resources and assets in order to achieve improved outcomes for children and enhanced talent pipelines for employers.

From our perspective, HB 312 represents a very significant step forward in the effort to better align resources and programs to foster enhanced outcomes. Several researchers such as John Kania and Mark Kramer have documented the importance of aligning community efforts, particularly if the desire is to impact key performance indicators such as third grade reading proficiency or high school graduation, or marketable credential or college degree completion.

Programs working in isolation simply do not create the sustained momentum needed for generating transformational outcomes.

Regional partnerships are structured to help address this circumstance, especially when they are structured consistent with the outcomes and framework outlined in HB 312, which is a well-grounded collective impact model and draws on lessons learned from across the country.

StriveTogether's approach, which is the foundation for the work of several of your existing regional education partnerships in Ohio including Dayton, Akron and Toledo is captured in our guiding framework, the StriveTogether Theory of Action™. That theory of action supports communities to build a strong civic infrastructure by connecting people, ideas and resources. And it leads to results. Indeed, that theory of action has been validated by a multi-year evaluation by Equal Measure, which showed that our approach helps communities improve key indicators within the early learning to career continuum. As more communities across the country use our approach to get results, we get closer to achieving our vision of the success of every child.

The regional partnership approach before you in HB312 is grounded on a very significant IF-THEN relationship between critical structural inputs and strategic educational and economic outcomes: IF you have a shared vision and IF you have the right partners and IF you have a sustainable backbone organization that collects and shares critical data, and IF the partners work collaboratively THEN improvements in outcomes like third grade reading proficiency and college attainment can and will occur.

Regional partnerships and HB 312 offer an opportunity to scale state-wide an approach that has made a real difference in a small number of Ohio geographies. Similar legislation in other states (e.g., Minnesota, which ranks 4th in overall credential and degree completion) has allowed them to create a powerful educational and partnership infrastructure, which is particularly important in a state such as Ohio where there is limited mobility (i.e., only two states have lower mobility rates than Ohio--Louisiana and Michigan). That limited mobility means you are trying to make the most of the talent that you have available...and Ohio has a LOT available.

Kania and Kramer's work proposes what HB 312 codifies: A broad collective impact approach to improve key educational attainment metrics around six critical performance milestones, which include kindergarten readiness, third grade reading, eighth grade math, high school graduation, college enrollment and college graduation.... all of which collectively influence employment readiness. The scope of these metrics requires that Ohio institutionalize collective impact structures that can leverage the work of existing educational assets (e.g., early learning efforts, K-12 schools, higher education institutions and a wide variety of stakeholders).

Quite simply: IF Ohio is going to secure the workforce it needs and foster the economic climate it wants, THEN it needs to institutionalize (and scale) regional partnerships that can align with

and leverage existing educational assets. And we at StriveTogether are committed to supporting this effort. Should this critical legislation pass, we stand at the ready to provide training and support to regional education partnerships to implement and improve the outcomes identified in HB312. Over the past ten years we have successfully secured, regranted and aligned more than 10 million dollars in philanthropic capital for regional education partnerships in Ohio and will continue to work diligently to secure and align resources for Ohio's future educational and workforce needs.

I applaud all the different efforts that are underway in our state to address our current and future workforce challenges. What is being proposed is a necessary and complementary approach that will enhance what exists and maximize and expand resources so that ALL students in Ohio can achieve their personal and professional potential... and so that communities have access to the intellectual capital that they need and require for economic vitality.

I offer my thanks to all of you for your thoughtful consideration of this proposed legislation. I'll be happy to address your questions.