



**House Higher Education Committee**

**Tom Hancock**

**House Bill 219**

**May 1, 2024**

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, my name is Tom Hancock and I am the Legislative Director for Auditor of State Keith Faber. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 219.

I would like to begin by thanking Representative Bird and Representative Brennan for their willingness to sponsor this bill. College Credit Plus is an important program that provides significant benefits to participating students and this legislation will go a long way toward expanding access to students across Ohio.

Specifically, House Bill 219 is an effort to address the program improvement recommendations identified in the Auditor of State's College Credit Plus Performance Audit.

College Credit Plus was created in 2015 with the goal of increasing participation in dual enrollment programming with minimal or no cost to the student.

The program has largely achieved that initial objective with data showing dramatic growth in dual enrollment participation versus its predecessor, the Post-Secondary Enrollment Option Program (PSEOP). To illustrate this point, the total number of credit hours taken in PSEOP's final year was approximately 190,000 hours; College Credit Plus had more than 650,000 credit hours taken during AY 2021. This is an increase of about 240 percent.

On an individual level, College Credit Plus provides numerous benefits to students and families. Data from the high school class of 2020 shows that participating students completed an average of 14 college credits, which translates to nearly five

completed college courses or about one semester's worth of coursework. In all, the average participating student saves approximately \$4,400 in tuition, fee, and textbook costs with the top quartile saving roughly \$11,800.

Program benefits, however, are not limited to monetary savings. For students who graduated from Ohio high schools in 2016, the college enrollment rate was 46 percent higher among program participants versus the statewide average. Once enrolled in college, the retention rate from year one to year two was 48 percent higher for students who had participated in College Credit Plus.

In total, program enrollment is greater than 76,000 students and nearly 8,000 associate degrees and certificates have been awarded as of 2021.

Despite these benefits, a disparity exists among school districts regarding how well this program is embraced. Our audit identified ten recommendations with the goal of incentivizing wider adoption and therefore providing greater accessibility.

House Bill 219's primary objective is to improve accessibility of the College Credit Plus program regardless of where a student goes to school.

The most effective way to achieve that goal is by encouraging school districts to offer more of these courses in the high school setting, especially when using high school teachers who are certified program instructors. This specific issue was a major focus of our audit findings.

With that in mind, College Credit Plus can be delivered one of four ways. First, students can attend courses on a college campus. Second, students may take course work online. And finally, College Credit Plus courses may be offered in the high school setting by either a credentialed high school teacher or by higher education faculty who comes to the high school to teach.

Of the four delivery models, the In-High School with a Credentialed Secondary Teacher model results in generally better performance outcomes, with students achieving a higher average GPA and a lower rate of course failure.

The reasons for this improved performance are straightforward. Courses taught in this fashion are done in a setting where students are already comfortable, and the classes are taught by teachers who work exclusively with high school students.

Additionally, the in-high school model eliminates logistical challenges seen in the other delivery models such as traveling to another campus or dealing with connectivity or hardware issues.

With that in mind, House Bill 219 proposes several changes to encourage wider adoption of the program as a whole:

- Requires the Chancellor of Higher Education to create an alternative certification process to certify instructors with relevant teaching experience as instructors;
- Adds a field on the school district report card that states whether schools properly inform students about the program;
- Requires higher education institutions and school districts to split the cost of textbooks 50-50;
- Requires ODE and ODHE to gather and report data relative to the actual cost of college credit plus programming and requires the auditor of state to review, audit, and report back to the general assembly on the data collected;
- Allows students to sign up on a semester-by-semester basis as opposed to the current deadline of April 1 of the prior year;
- Requires ODE and ODHE to enforce program requirements that are defined in ORC 3365.

Finally, Auditor Faber is also appreciative of the legislature's decision to renew the College Credit Plus teacher credentialing grant program in House Bill 33. Our audit recommended the program's renewal because the grant program will go a long way toward expanding the pool of qualified high school instructors.

In conclusion, House Bill 219 is an opportunity to improve a program that helps students get a head start on their higher education career.

Members of our performance audit team are here with me today and we are happy to answer questions about House Bill 219 or the audit report itself.

Again, I would like to thank the bill's sponsors for their partnership and thank you to the committee for allowing me to testify.

