

**HOUSE BILL 71
COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PROGRAM
PROPONENT TESTIMONY**

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Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony on House Bill 71.

My name is Alexandra Denney and I am the Vice President of Government Relations and Communications for the Ohio Business Roundtable, a statewide business association of CEOs and Presidents of the top companies in the state. We currently have over 100 members, and the companies collectively employ over half a million Ohioans and generate a revenue of more than \$1.5 trillion, which helps support Ohio's economy.

Our membership is inclusive of industry leading companies representing over 20 Ohio industries which includes—but is not limited to—companies such as KeyBank and Huntington representing the banking sector; Cincinnati Financial and Nationwide in the insurance sector; Kokosing representing construction; CareSource and Cleveland Clinic, representing healthcare; The J.M. Smucker Company and Wendy's representing the food industry; Owens Corning, RPM International, Inc, and Cleveland Cliffs in the manufacturing sector; and many more.

The Ohio Business Roundtable, and the members we represent, are focused on promoting the economic competitiveness of the state. We are all aware of the significant progress Ohio has made in recent years given several economic development wins. However, in order to fill the workforce demand these economic development projects will create, we must be able to retain students within the Buckeye State.

House Bill 71 establishes the Community Connectors Workforce Program, which is housed within the Department of Education. This program tasks Ohio's Education Service Centers with placing one, or up to three, directors in the high schools the ESC serves.

Under the bill, the directors must assist students with identifying jobs and internships in their area, and guide them throughout the process by providing them with resume, interview and job performance skills necessary to succeed in their chosen field.

Business Leadership to Build a Better Ohio

The Ohio Business Roundtable is a proponent of this legislation because we believe it will have a positive impact in three ways. The first is that it will provide high school students with important experience to help them determine if a career path is a good fit for them.

Second, this program will help connect Ohio businesses—such as members of the Ohio Business Roundtable—with internship talent that can fill entry-level workforce gaps.

Lastly, by connecting students with valuable opportunities within Ohio companies, the program will increase the likelihood of students remaining in the state following high school because of the connections they made during their internship.

Ultimately, Ohio must attract and retain more workforce talent in order to remain competitive in the future. The Community Connectors Workforce Program will strengthen the state's workforce by connecting students with meaningful opportunities right here in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions the committee might have.