



*BEFORE THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PROPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1*

Good afternoon, Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Education 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 nearly 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, for his work on this important issue. As he rightly points out, a key component in addressing Ohio's workforce needs now and into the future includes ensuring our K-12 education system 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.

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 impact on the operations of our schools, those trends extend beyond 2020. These scores highlight the need for the legislature to ensure that our education system is upholding its responsibilities in the preparation of our young people for the bright futures they deserve.

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 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.

We support SB 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, making for brighter futures for younger Ohioans and encouraging more of them to remain in and build their lives here in Ohio. By making this investment in our education system, by refocusing our efforts through the creation of a statewide agency, one that is directly accountable to elected officials such as yourselves, we believe Ohio's future will remain bright.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this legislation. We look forward to working with all of you to enhance Ohio's education system to prepare our future generations for the economic opportunities of the 21st century.