

**Ohio Senate Education Committee
Interested Party Written Testimony
HB 33 – FY24-25 State Operating Budget**

**Sandy Reed, Teacher
New Albany Middle School
Science 7/8 and Social Studies 7**

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the amendment for the PAST Foundation's **STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative**.

I wanted to share with you my experience as a fellow in the current cohort of the PAST STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative, where I am participating in the drone program.

I have been teaching since 1986 when I graduated from The Ohio State University. I have taught 6th, 7th, and 8th graders science for 29 years, spending some of those years at Sells Middle School in Dublin, Ohio and also as a teacher/administrator in a private Montessori middle school in Columbus. During those years I earned my masters degree in Gifted and Talented from Ashland University and developed a middle school science curriculum for identified gifted students. Since arriving in New Albany in 2002, I have taught 6th, 7th and 8th graders science and social studies and have served as the district's Environmental Education Coordinator. While in that position, I worked closely with teachers, developing hands-on, inquiry-based lessons and research activities for students K-12.

Professionally, I have earned several teaching awards, the latest being the Ohio Environmental Education Award for Best Practices in 2016, and before that I was presented with the National Outstanding Green Educator Award in 2014.

I share my background to illustrate the breadth and depth of my experience as an educator, so that you understand I am not new to professional development and training opportunities for teachers. Yet the PAST STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative, where I am a fellow in the drone program, has been a unique learning opportunity for me. I began my journey to Industry Recognized Credential attainment as a PAST Fellow in the fall of 2021, thanks to your partnership with PAST Foundation and their partnership with the Unmanned Safety Institute (USI).

The program is designed to assist classroom teachers to learn about industry recognized credential opportunities that lead to employment in Ohio by first earning the credential myself and then assisting in the building of a program where students experience and are exposed to the opportunities afforded by earning the credential. The credential that I earned through the initiation of my program is the FAA Part 107 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Certification. This certification enables me to successfully file a flight plan for a drone and use it to instruct my students in the safe use of an unmanned vehicle as a component to their pathway to employment after graduation.

The drone industry is expected to expand by 51% over the next three years. There are seven Ohio industries that rely on drone flight including: transportation, agriculture, energy, construction, real estate, film-making and telecommunications. In each of these industries, the flight of the drone is but a component of the work required. Most drone pilots are required to stack certifications on top of the flying to create reports, edit videography, overlay on structural drawings and CAD images, and thermal imagery among others. My role is to give my students the experience and exposure to unmanned flight, teach them the rules and regulations regarding flight plans and safety, assist them in attaining the FAA part 107 certification and then to plan the stackable credentials that would be needed in the particular pathway that the student wants to explore for employment in the future.

I am passionate about giving my students the experiences that engage and excite them to think about entry into the workforce. To see them light up with the problem that they can solve through work-based learning approaches that our PAST Fellowship encourages creates a “why” to the learning that students need to be engaged in things like physics. This program has enabled me as an instructor to implement creative opportunities for students and I am appreciative of my participation as a PAST Fellow.

I strongly urge you to continue and increase funding for the PAST Foundation STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative so that more teachers around the state have the opportunity to participate in this program. Increasing the knowledge and skill base of our educators around the state – and not just our STEM teachers, but teachers of ALL subjects – is crucial for our state to meet the workforce needs we are hearing about daily.

As educators, we love teaching – we want our kids to succeed – but we need the expertise around the state’s in-demand jobs and a deep understanding of the skills needed to pursue them if we want to effectively equip our kids for the future workforce of Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of the STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative amendment and for the chance to submit written testimony in support of this program.

Sandy Reed
New Albany Middle School
6600 Dublin Granville Rd.
New Albany, OH 43054