



**Testimony before the Senate Finance Committee on Budget Workforce Issues**  
Am. Sub. HB 33 (FY 2024-25 Budget Bill)  
*May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Jack Hershey, President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the trustees and presidents of all twenty-three of the state's public community colleges. Since I have already provided OACC's comprehensive budget testimony before the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee, I wanted to take this opportunity to briefly discuss just a few issues that are critical to helping community colleges meet today's urgent workforce challenges.

First, last week the Workforce and Higher Education Committee heard testimony that questioned a House-added provision in HB 33 that would allow the chancellor to provide a College Credit Plus statewide waiver for programs in high-demand fields that are developed with industry partners. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide some background behind this change.

Over the last year, OACC has worked with representatives from Intel and with the Ohio Manufacturer's Association to develop a model pathway for those who want to work in the semiconductor field, whether that be for Intel directly, another advanced manufacturer, or one of the many companies that will be part of the supply chain. This pathway is designed with flexibility and scale in mind. The curriculum we have developed will be widely shared, as open source, with everyone in the state to utilize and adopt, including universities, career tech schools and Ohio Technical Centers. As we developed this curriculum, we have also build entry ways into these credential pathways through College Credit Plus.

College Credit Plus is still primarily geared toward high school students who want to pursue the more "traditional" college pathway towards a bachelor's degree. Under current law, the Chancellor may provide individual eligibility waivers on a case-by-case basis between a school district and a college or university to allow traditionally underrepresented students who might not test as "college ready" to still be able to participate in the state's dual enrollment program.

Given the overwhelming need to produce more graduates in fields like Engineering Technology, the House amended HB 33 to simply allow the chancellor the ability to approve a statewide or "blanket" waiver for certain pathways that lead to credentials that were developed with industry partners in high-demand fields such as the advanced manufacturing or semiconductor industries.

This new language ensures students who might not meet traditional college readiness standards, but show skills in other areas, are allowed to participate in CCP and pursue credentials that lead directly to the workforce after completion. Unlike what was stated in testimony last week, this amendment is not a major expansion of College Credit Plus; rather, it streamlines a sometimes-lengthy administrative approval process for school districts and higher education partners who may decide that these specific pathways make sense to offer to local high school students.

We often hear of the importance of an all-of-the-above approach to meet Ohio's urgent workforce needs. With this new authority, the state will be able to provide multiple pathways to prepare high school students for these in-demand, high wage jobs. OACC agrees with our K-12 partners that the state needs to

look at ways to continue to increase more career technical educational opportunities, and we believe the CCP statewide innovative waiver provides just one more pathway for those HS students who want to move directly into the workforce. This amendment received strong bipartisan support in the House and was vetted with the Chancellor and ODE. *We would strongly encourage the Senate to maintain this permissive authority in HB 33.*

As we celebrate the recent economic development wins of our state and JobsOhio, while striving to meet the workforce needs that they have presented us, our colleges are continuing to hear an enormous amount of excitement from economic development officials around the state that would suggest that we should certainly plan for the likelihood that Ohio's winning streak is far from over.

In that spirit, the Executive Budget included one-time, targeted funding that will help ensure the state's postsecondary training providers can collectively and collaboratively respond to both current and future workforce needs. Both the WorkFORCE Ohio program and the Super RAPIDS program planned for this likelihood by providing funding to be available at the ready for when the next economic development program is announced. *Whether it is through these specific proposals, or through another strategy that the Senate may embrace, we would encourage you to plan for the future in this budget, and ensure that some funding is set aside to help respond to Ohio's next economic development success.*

Finally, we have come to believe that meeting these enormous workforce needs will be an approach that needs everyone involved and working together. While that certainly is true among education and workforce training providers, it is also true among governmental agencies. We fully anticipate and will need the federal government, state government and local governments at the table, utilizing every tool available to help ensure that we are all doing whatever we can to help Ohio businesses meet their workforce needs. While exploring these options, it was discovered that while most community colleges in the state have the authority to go to the ballot to seek local support from their community, the Ohio Revised Code does not provide the same authority to every community college in every community. *We would request that you to address this discrepancy to ensure community has the same set of tools available to them, and then let each community decide what strategy and what tools makes the best sense for them, based upon the specific needs of their local community.*

Thank you for your time and attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.