

COLUMBUS STATE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee Sub. H. B. No. 33

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Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is David Harrison, and I am president of Columbus State Community College. As you work to address Ohio's most pressing needs through the biennial budget, I'm pleased to share how Columbus State and other community colleges throughout the state are working to prepare Ohioans for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Columbus State is the largest community college in Ohio and the most diverse higher ed institution in our region. We serve over 40,000 students annually and have been nationally recognized for advancements in student success and workforce innovation, dramatically increasing opportunities for students from all backgrounds. We have a partner-first ethic and are Central Ohio's workforce convener. We run the region's Workforce Advisory Council, comprised of the chief talent officers of the largest employers in the region, to create innovative partnerships between employers and higher education. In collaboration with the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, Columbus State manages the Central Ohio Compact, an alliance of leaders from K-12, higher education, employers, and social service groups focused on closing opportunity gaps and expanding access to successful career preparation for all students. Through our Preferred Pathway program with universities in our region, Columbus State offers students a route to a debt-free bachelor's degree.

Gratitude for your leadership

At Columbus State, we start every gathering with gratitude, and I want to follow our practice here. Thank you for this transformational moment. Thank you for your leadership in providing unprecedented economic opportunities for our state. Two years ago, none of us were talking about semiconductors or gene therapy or EV technology. Now Ohio's community colleges are working every day with companies in these fields to create generational career opportunities for our students. I've been in this business for 30 years in Florida and Ohio. I can tell you that I've never been a part of a moment this transformational from an economic opportunity standpoint. It's incredibly exciting for our state. Thank you for your leadership in making it happen. I know it's been a leap of faith to support unparalleled investments in emerging industries. Thank you for taking that leap. Ohio's community colleges are taking it right along with you.

These are community college jobs.

In less than 24 months, Ohio has celebrated three of the largest economic development deals in the state's history in Amgen, Intel, and Honda's EV plant. As we learned more about each of these industries, it became clear that these were our jobs – these are community college jobs.

Intel has been consistent that 70% of the jobs at their fabs will be technician-level roles, whose ideal preparation is at one of Ohio's community colleges. Many of Intel's executives, including their CEO and their Ohio general manager, started their Intel careers as technicians with community college credentials. In response, Ohio's community colleges are collaborating as never before to capitalize on this moment. Intel has provided start-up funding for Columbus State and the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) to stand up the Ohio Semiconductor Collaboration Network. Through this effort, Ohio's 23 community colleges are working together on a statewide curriculum to serve the semiconductor industry and its supply chain.

From bootcamps to certificates to associate degrees and beyond, Ohio needs training options that will prepare our residents to enter advanced manufacturing fields – whether they are newly entering the workforce or adapting skills from another industry – and to progress up the career ladder. In our semiconductor pathway, people will be able to earn an initial certificate in nine months and an advanced certificate with another four months of study. These stack together, creating steps that allow someone to secure their first job in the industry and then continue on a path to an associate degree and career advancement, all within our years.

Intel, Amgen, Honda, and other major employers have a stated commitment to building the next generation of talent. These companies have specific hiring strategies for women, military veterans, people of color, and individuals from communities that have fallen behind economically. They are describing community college students. When it comes to the Future of Work – the jobs that are going to change the trajectory of families, the path is through Ohio's community colleges. Again, these are our jobs.

These new opportunities add to the deep work we do every day with existing employers across Ohio. Information technology and healthcare are leading examples of how we're constantly innovating to meet workforce demand. While college and university enrollment has fallen statewide during the pandemic, Columbus State's IT programs have grown by more than 20% in the past year, including a 34% increase for Black student enrollment. And the most acute workforce need in many Ohio

communities is in healthcare. Columbus State is partnering with OhioHealth, Nationwide Children's, and the Wexner Medical Center at Ohio State University to create new career pathways and Earn-and-Learn opportunities for students starting in high school.

How to modernize the model for bachelor's degrees

Given the state's economic development priorities, we believe that Ohio's higher ed budget should be aligned with the types of training that workers will need. The new jobs that will drive the state's economy for years to come are community college jobs — we provide the certificates and associate degrees needed for 70% of these jobs. While bachelor's degrees are as important as ever, they're becoming less relevant for entry-level roles. It's well documented that employers are increasingly eliminating the bachelor's degree as a requirement for many entry-level jobs.

At Columbus State, through our partnerships with universities and employers, we're expanding the idea of what we call "the 10-year bachelor's degree." Students start at Columbus State in engineering technology, computer science, or other technical fields, and get a paid internship through our Earn-and-Learn program, which often pays for their associate degree. The company then hires our graduating students in a full-time role, providing tuition assistance for their bachelor's degree. Through this program, we have graduates at Honda and dozens of other employers who have earned their associate degree and bachelor's degree part-time while working full-time, with their tuition covered by our employer partners. They have no student debt and have been advancing in their careers since they graduated from high school.

At Columbus State, we have creative partnerships with universities such as Ohio State, Franklin, Capital, and Otterbein to create seamless pathways to bachelor's degrees. This model gives us a great foundation for continued innovation. We're excited about the opportunity to expand this kind of model to employers like Intel.

Public policy aligned with this unprecedented opportunity

Ohio has made substantial investments in economic development initiatives in recent months. To get the full payoff from these commitments, we need the right workforce system in place. Intel, Amgen, and Honda represent a good proxy for the accelerated pace of change required to meet these new opportunities. We need to think differently. Community colleges are excited for the challenges before us, and we are confident in our ability to deliver. But we need your help.

Our top budget priorities would give us the resources and the flexibility to respond to the needs of the emerging workforce. Funding short-term credentials, increasing SSI for community colleges and supporting wrap-around services through the Access Challenge would lead to a rapid, dramatic increase in the technician-level workforce these new opportunities demand.

Funding for short-term certificates. The most urgent policy change is to provide \$50 million per year in operating funding for short-term workforce education at community colleges. We're grateful that the House has included \$25 million per year for the Talent Ready Grant. Doubling that program would provide targeted capacity for colleges to respond quickly and at scale, and would provide funding for students to gain the needed credentials for these powerful career opportunities.

Restoring SSI funding to as-introduced levels. The State Share of Instruction (SSI) provides critical operating support to students in degree programs at both community colleges and universities. The state is relying on community colleges to increase the number of individuals in the workforce to meet the economic opportunity of this moment, and SSI needs to keep pace. We ask that the Senate restore the 3.0% annual increase that was included in the Executive Budget.

Restoring the Access Challenge. Community colleges have demonstrated the value of direct academic support and wrap-around services that help students complete their certificate or degree program. Our students lead complicated lives. Columbus State and other community colleges throughout Ohio have demonstrated that by eliminating non-academic barriers such as food, housing, transportation, and childcare, success rates increase dramatically, especially for our busiest and most vulnerable students. The Executive Budget had proposed \$40 million per year in targeted funding through the Access Challenge. We request that the Senate restore that level of funding for this crucial program to ensure more students stay on path to graduation.

In addition to these three priorities, I respectfully ask for your consideration of two other items that would support our focus on preparing students for the workforce needs of Ohio.

Local operating support. Ohio has three types of community colleges under state law — community colleges, technical colleges, and state community colleges. All but state community colleges have the authority under the Ohio Revised Code for their boards to place a question before local voters regarding an operating levy. For parity, we support an amendment (SC0245X2) that would allow state community colleges this same tool to address Ohio's workforce needs. Importantly,

the language would ensure that if local voters approve an operating levy, the dollars may be spent only in that county and every resident would receive a significant tuition discount.

Capital Investment. While the primary focus of this legislative cycle is on the state's operating budget, our institutions also have capital needs to support these new industries. Once again, collaboration can be a winning strategy. The state has funds that they'd like to dedicate to non-recurring workforce expenses. Many local municipalities do as well. And federal investments such as the CHIPS Act provide additional funding opportunities for capital investments. Creative prospects exist for local, state, and federal funding to be leveraged for substantial impact. The proposed Ohio Center for Advanced Technologies at Columbus State would provide a statewide resource for emerging technologies including semiconductor manufacturing, biotech and gene therapy, EV technologies, and clean energy technologies. By being centrally located, this center would provide access to advanced certifications for students and employers throughout the state. State funding could be leveraged with local and federal resources to maximize impact.

Conclusion

Individually, Intel, Amgen, or Honda's EV investment would be considered a generational opportunity. Combined, they represent a transformative moment for our state – an unprecedented opportunity to advance economic mobility, to ensure inclusive economic prosperity, and to eliminate income inequality based on ZIP code. Ohio's community colleges are prepared to meet the moment. But we need resources.

Budgets should reflect priorities. Ohio has a unique opportunity to prioritize the economic success of all Ohioans for the next generation. Good jobs can transform lives and change the trajectory of families. Investments in Ohio's community colleges are investments in Ohioans. Our students are from here, they want to stay here, build their careers here, raise their families here. Let's not miss this transformational opportunity by thinking too narrowly, too traditionally. Ohio's community colleges stand ready to position our state as the nation's leader in inclusive talent development. We look forward to working with you to make this happen.