



## **Ohio Restaurant Association Testimony in Support of Ohio ProStart in Substitute House Bill 33**

June 8, 2023

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of Ohio's 23,676 restaurant and foodservice locations and Ohio's 520,000 restaurant and foodservice employees, the Ohio Restaurant Association and our Education Foundation appreciates the opportunity to speak today in support of the Ohio ProStart Program.

Ohio ProStart is a two year best-in-class, industry endorsed culinary arts and restaurant management training program for high school students. ProStart's industry guided curriculum provides real-world educational opportunities that build a strong foundation of practical skills that will last students a lifetime.

All education suffered during COVID, but hands-on programs like ProStart that require robust in-person classroom instruction, lean on industry to be actively involved, and include gatherings and competitions with multiple schools suffered significantly.

While participation in ProStart suffered during COVID, Ohio ProStart schools are seeing more students involved now than any time in recent memory with this year's Junior class far exceeding expectations. The Ohio Restaurant Association, the Association's Education Foundation, and Ohio ProStart greatly appreciate the long-time support of the Governor and the Legislature for this well deserving program. In order to help Ohio ProStart fully bounce back and prepare more students for a career in culinary arts and hospitality management, we graciously request an increase to \$500,000 in each fiscal year for the Ohio ProStart program.

This additional support will help more students become involved, enhance student experiences including additional and elevated field experiences and competitions, and allow for even more industry involvement in this exciting program. Helping more students find their passion and build real world skills that employers recognize and appreciate is Ohio ProStart's mission and we believe one worthy of your strong support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today in support of Ohio ProStart and for all you are doing to help Ohio's hospitality businesses continue to provide robust employment and career opportunities and contribute to vibrant, thriving communities throughout Ohio.

Tod Bowen  
Managing Director of External Affairs and Government Relations  
Ohio Restaurant Association