



**Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
State Operating Budget (HB 33)
May 11, 2023**

**Testimony of Ohio ACTE and OACTS, OTC Division
Jamie Nash, Superintendent, Buckeye Hills Career Center**

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jamie Nash, Superintendent of Buckeye Hills Career Center, and I am testifying on behalf of my school and its adult education Ohio Technical Center (OTC), as well as the Ohio Association for Career Technical Education (Ohio ACTE), and the Ohio Association of Career Technical Superintendents (OACTS). These Associations not only represent the state's 49 Joint Vocational School Districts, but also its 51 OTCs—which focus on providing short-term adult technical training to meet Ohio's diverse, regional workforce needs.

We are located in Southeast Ohio. Our Gallia-Jackson-Vinton JVSD serves as the Career Technical Planning District lead for 3 counties and 6 districts. But more relevant for this committee, we also operate an Ohio Technical Center focused exclusively on Adult Ed., which serves 4 primary counties, including Meigs and 6 other secondary counties.

Background on OTCs: OTCs play a unique and vital role in the state's higher education framework. We offer the most efficient, successful, and cost-effective short-term technical training programs that deliver an immediate and lasting impact. Our track record of success is unmatched: we are proud to boast a 96% job placement rate and 81% program completion rate—statistics the state often promotes, and which justify the renewed focus and investment in our sector. The state's OTC infrastructure offers adults a menu of options for their career pathway that do not necessitate an expensive, multi-year college commitment. And our infrastructure is strong: OTCs are located in every area of the state and accessible to all adult students.

Funded and regulated by the Ohio Department of Higher Education, OTCs provide a host of educational services; adults can earn certificates, licenses and other credentials in typically a year or less. Although normally housed and governed by either the Career Center (Joint Vocational School District), or the comprehensive school district of which they are part, each OTC has a separate funding mechanism than its secondary counterpart. General funds from local levies or other local funds are not used for OTC expenses. Each OTC therefore stands alone except for the use of facilities and utilities (although there is a trend that more OTCs are paying for these expenses as well).

Funding for OTCs: The Executive and House budgets call for increasing OTC funding to approximately \$22.5 million in FY 24 and \$23.1 million in FY 25. These funding levels represent a three percent increase in funding each fiscal year. The increase is necessary for OTCs to maintain strong adult education programming and otherwise continue their mission of preparing Ohioans for the workforce.

The Executive and House budgets also contain numerous other beneficial programs and funding streams aimed at encouraging and expanding adult education. Highlights include:

- **OTC Plus:** The budget contains language facilitating the ability of high school students to take coursework and otherwise earn credentials and certificates at OTCs. (See proposed R.C. 3313.901, EDUCD2). We strongly support these provisions, which will help address and remedy capacity issues (i.e., wait lists) at the state’s career-tech schools. It will also spur the growth of adult education programming statewide. We are currently working with policymakers to simplify the language and proposed process, as well as create an appropriate funding mechanism and structure. We hope this committee considers including our proposed amendment into the Senate Substitute Budget Bill.
- **Short-Term Certificate Funding:** OTCs’ primary focus is short-term certificate training. State statistics on student outcomes have shown that we are the most efficient and effective at operating and delivering short-term programs to Ohio’s adult student population. To that end, we are pleased the Executive and House budgets greatly increase investments in short-term certificate programs and needs-based financial aid for students via the proposed “Work Ready” (\$40M) and “Talent Ready” (\$50M) Grant Programs. OTC students have significantly benefited from similar funding streams over the last two years; we know these programs will have a meaningful impact.
- **College Credit Plus Expansion:** We have some questions and concerns regarding the proposed expansion of College Credit Plus and its existing Innovative Waiver Pathway (See proposed R.C. 3365.131, BORCD104). It appears the House added language allowing certain students who do not meet traditional readiness standards to qualify for CCP via credentialing or certificate programs. We are not certain what prompted the language, but we are concerned it duplicates numerous longstanding programs (highlighted below) that already allow students to earn college credit without additional cost to the student, the secondary school district, or post-secondary institution. We would be happy to serve as a resource and recommend an examination of this issue before codifying the proposed changes. If this committee ultimately seeks to maintain the expansion, we would recommend amending language to allow the Chancellor to leverage the state’s OTCs and the numerous associated certificate and credentialing programs.
 - **Industry Recognized Credential Transfer Assurance Guide (ITAGs):** Program that awards college credit to students who hold one or more approved industry recognized credentials. See: <https://transfercredit.ohio.gov/students/student-programs/itags/itags++student>.
 - **Career-Technical Assurance Guides:** Program that awards college credit to students for career-tech coursework taken in high school. See: <https://transfercredit.ohio.gov/students/student-programs/Career-Technical-Assurance-Guides>.
 - **Bilateral Articulation Agreements:** Created between high schools and post-secondary institutions to establish college credit and grant opportunities for students.
- **SuperRAPIDS:** The Executive Budget proposed \$200M in Federal ARPA dollars to boost funding for the coveted Regionally Aligned Priorities in Delivering Skills (RAPDS) program; the House budget cut the proposed program to \$100M. We would emphasize that the Executive and House SuperRAPIDS appropriations facilitate the purchase of new equipment, which will allow

for program expansion in response to local and regional workforce needs. Additionally, through co-op's, internships, customized training, and earn-while you learn opportunities, this funding will help drive partnerships between OTCs and businesses—expanding career opportunities for adults statewide. We would recommend the Senate restore funding to \$200M as in the Executive Proposal. We believe we could help put those dollars to good use right away.

- TechCred: The Executive and House Budgets maintain funding for the successful TechCred program, increasing the appropriation to more than \$50 million over the biennium to support the upskilling of Ohio's workforce and to help individuals qualify for a better job in today's modern economy. TechCred reimburses businesses and individuals for the cost of short-term certificate programs, and has to date assisted more than 1,800 employers with more than 44,000 credentials earned.

In closing, CTE is good for the Ohio economy, the workforce, local communities, educators, families, and clearly for students. The CTE community will continue to demonstrate great return on investments. Thank you for your time and I welcome any questions from the committee.