



## **Testimony Before the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee**

*Senate Bill 104 – College Credit Plus*

*Wednesday, February 28, 2024*

Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today on Senate Bill 104, which makes several policy improvements to Ohio's popular College Credit Plus program. I am Tom Walsh with the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, which represents the presidents and trustees of Ohio's public two-year institutions.

OACC applauds Senators Cirino and Brenner for sponsoring SB 104, as well as Auditor of State Keith Faber for advancing many of the bill's provisions that were included in the 2022 Performance Audit of the College Credit Program. The performance audit provided a comprehensive overview and recommendations on how the State can improve the CCP, particularly focusing on policy changes aimed at closing disparity gaps in participation for economically disadvantaged or underrepresented students.

College Credit Plus (CCP) was first implemented in 2015 as a statewide program designed to provide open access to all college-ready students. The program serves a dual purpose of increasing access for students who wish to complete college courses in high school and improving affordability by reducing tuition costs for students pursuing a postsecondary credential or degree at a college or university.

The framework for CCP was developed through a collaborative process with K-12 and higher education stakeholders, including the Ohio School Boards Association, Buckeye Association of School Administrators, the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, AICUO, IUC and OACC. Unlike the former Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) or other advanced standing offerings like AP or IB, whose offerings varies widely district by district, CCP ensures that any eligible student can participate in this statewide dual enrollment program, regardless of what school they attend or their financial means.

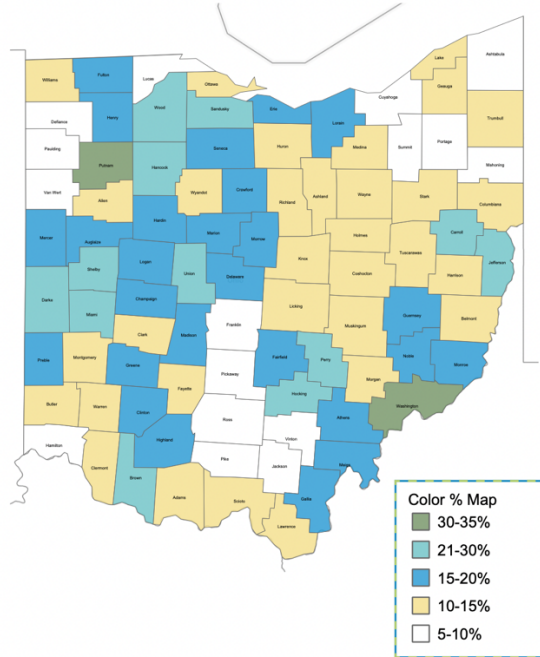
Because of its shared cost model, support structure, and commitment to access and quality, College Credit Plus has become a model statewide dual enrollment program across the country. Tens of thousands of Ohioans can get a jump-start on the postsecondary pathway that makes the most sense for their academic and career goals through CCP. Thanks to many of the strong, innovative partnerships between secondary schools and our colleges, students and their families have been able to save more than \$1 billion in tuition costs, and over 10,000 postsecondary certificates, credentials or degrees have been awarded while students are completing high school.

According to ODHE's Annual Report for the 2022-23 School Year:

- A total of 80,163 students participated in CCP with \$194 million in tuition savings.
  - 59,838 students took CCP through a community college.
  - 155,208 courses were successfully completed with a total 479,928 credit hours earned at one of our Ohio's public two-year institutions.
  - These students had an average GPA was 3.30.
- 1,026 certificates and degrees were awarded.
- 75% of participating CCP high school graduates continued at a community college or university after graduation, with most of these students (83%) attending a 4-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree.

As the Auditor’s performance audit and ODHE’s recently released 2022-23 College Credit Plus Annual Report showed, geographic and demographic gaps in CCP participation still exists across the state.

*Student Participation as Percentage of High School Population by County (2022-2023)*



As this map illustrates, there are still several counties across the state where CCP student participation lags other parts of the state. There is certainly no one reason why this is the case. However, from ensuring students are made aware of CCP, to providing greater opportunities to allow eligible students to participate, to ensuring qualified faculty can deliver these college-level courses, SB 104 is a balanced approach to alleviated some of the barriers preventing eligible students from benefiting from CCP.

OACC appreciated the willingness of Senator Cirino and Senator Brenner to listen to our concerns and suggestions throughout the stakeholder process. We believe that the bill before this committee today will expand access for more students, while maintaining the rigor and quality standards of these college-level courses.

Intent to Participate

OACC supports the provision to provide another option during the school year for a student to submit an intent to participate in CCP if they missed the deadline the previous April. We also support the inclusion in the latest sub-bill of a date-specific deadline of November 1 to better ensure compliance and administrative burdens for secondary schools and our colleges.

Credentiailling of Qualified Faculty

Late last year, the Higher Learning Commission updated its policies and procedures in determining faculty qualifications. The factors that can now be considered include achievement of academic credentials, progress toward academic credentials, and/or equivalent experience. OACC supports the requirement in SB 104 to require ODHE to establish a credentialing process for certifying instructors based on relevant teaching experience, with the goal of allowing more qualified instructors to deliver courses at both the high school and on a campus. As ODHE convenes this process, it will be important to update these recommendations to

provide consistent standards for credentialing CCP faculty and ensure it is aligned with the new HLC policy for the transferability of credits.

#### Improved Program Information and Compliance

SB 104 will better ensure students and their families receive more consistent information from both secondary schools and our colleges and universities. Under the bill, schools will be required to use student forms developed by the chancellor and the Department of Education and Workforce, while also requiring orientation for participating students to meet the concise guidelines developed by the chancellor. Furthermore, the bill will strengthen compliance and oversight to ensure that public institutions and secondary schools are fully engaging and participating in the program.

#### Cost Data Collection

Finally, SB 104 requires the State to collect data relative to the actual cost of the CCP program to help the Auditor of State to review and audit the information. The Auditor of State's recent special report was the first attempt that OACC is aware of that tried to identify the direct and indirect financial impacts of the program on a statewide basis. We continue working with the Auditor's office on ways to provide better clarity around many of the data assumptions and methodologies used to help illustrate some of the financial impacts on the institutions. As the report stated, "the costs of College Credit Plus are not easily defined." As the State continues to review the program and analyze the impact of changes to cost structures within CCP – including textbooks costs, default rates, and other fee structures – having standard cost and revenue data will be important.

OACC appreciates the bill sponsors for understanding the concerns that were raised during the stakeholder engagement process with the proposed textbook language that was included in the "As Introduced" version of SB 104. Ensuring Ohio has the most accurate and comprehensive information on CCP will help policymakers and stakeholders better understand how potential changes may impact this important college access program.

In conclusion, OACC is pleased to support SB 104 to expand opportunities to enable more students to participate in this important program. As Auditor Faber wrote in joint Op-Ed with OACC last year, "By taking CCP to the next level, not only will more students be able to use it to move up, but Ohio benefits as a whole from a larger workforce filled with people with greater skills...They and Ohio will be better off for it."