

Testimony of Shaun C. Yoder

President & CEO, SYC Strategies

On Behalf of **Modern States Education Alliance**
Before the House Education Committee

March 5, 2025

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of amending H.B. No. 96 to expand college access and improve affordability by capitalizing on Modern States and the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP). I am Shaun Yoder, President & CEO of SYC Strategies, representing Modern States, a national nonprofit dedicated to making college more affordable and accessible for all learners.

A significant portion of Ohio's future jobs, projected to be 66 percent by 2031, will require postsecondary education. However, the financial burden of college is substantial, with average tuition exceeding \$10,000 annually and student loan debt averaging \$34,000. This financial strain can deter many Ohio students from pursuing higher education. Expanding transformative early college credit opportunities in high school is a proven way to reduce costs and increase completion rates. Ohio provides multiple pathways for students to earn college credit in high school, including College Credit Plus (CCP), Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB). However, CLEP—an equally valuable but underutilized option—remains less recognized and less widely used.

Modern States is working to change that. Over the past year, we've increased awareness of the opportunity and enrolled over 1,600 Ohio learners in our free, high-quality online courses, which align with CLEP exams. These courses prepare students to earn college credit at nearly 3,000 institutions nationwide, including all Ohio public colleges and universities. Additionally, Modern States helps cover the cost of CLEP exams for students who complete our courses, further reducing financial barriers and accelerating their path to a degree.

THE NEED FOR STATUTORY PARITY

Despite its benefits, CLEP lacks equal recognition in Ohio law compared to AP, IB, and CCP. Our proposed amendment ensures high school students who pass CLEP exams receive the same recognition and benefits as those in other advanced standing programs. Specifically, we seek to:

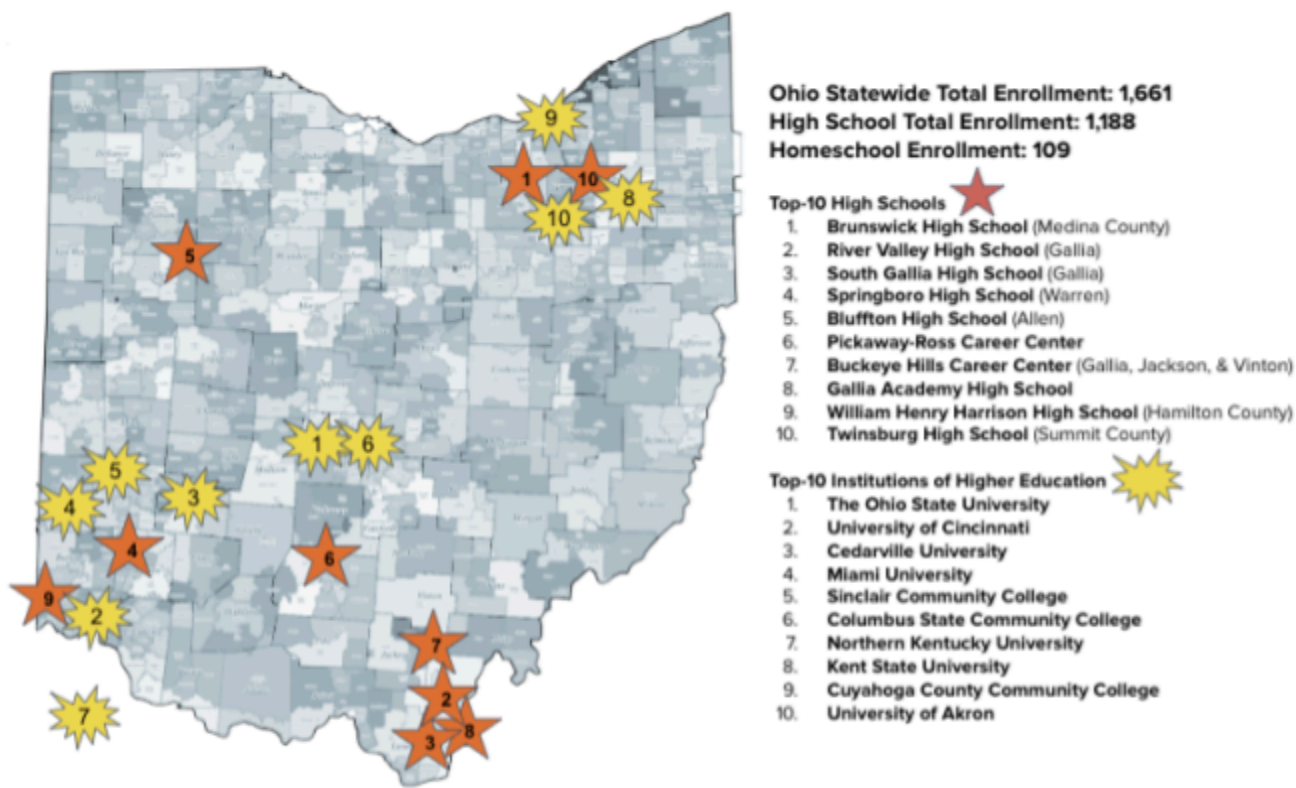


1. **Ensure Equal Recognition of CLEP** – Explicitly include CLEP wherever AP, IB, and CCP are referenced in Ohio Revised Code as an “advanced standing program.”
2. **Improve School and District Accountability** – Recognize CLEP within Ohio’s College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness Component on school report cards to give credit for students who earn a successful score on CLEP.
3. **Align CLEP with Graduation Requirements** – Permit students to use CLEP scores to qualify for Ohio’s citizenship, science, and technology diploma seals.

MOMENTUM AND SUCCESS IN OHIO

Modern States and CLEP have already gained significant traction in Ohio, with strong adoption in K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and workforce initiatives. **More than 1,600 Ohio learners are currently using Modern States courses, and we aim to increase that number severalfold in the next year.**

Additionally, significant numbers of students at higher education institutions such as **Ohio State University, the University of Cincinnati, Cedarville University, and Miami University** use CLEP to earn free college credit.





CONCLUSION

By amending H.B. No. 96 to recognize CLEP on the same footing as other advanced standing programs, Ohio can ensure that CLEP is recognized and funded in the same way as AP and IB, expanding pathways for students to earn college credit and reducing financial barriers to higher education. At a time when affordability is a top concern for students and families, this is a simple, cost-effective policy change that will have an immediate and lasting impact.

I appreciate your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions.

Shaun C. Yoder

President & CEO, SYC Strategies

shaun@sycstrategies.llc

614-917-7174