



---

**Proponent testimony submitted to the  
House Education Committee  
Excel Center Amendment to Budget  
Lance W. Detrick, President & Chief Executive Officer  
Jennifer Bonifas, Vice President & Chief Mission Officer  
March 5, 2025**

Chair Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for allowing us to testify today proponents to an amendment to HB 96 creating the first Excel Center Adult High School in Ohio. My name is Lance Detrick, and I am the President & CEO of Goodwill Easterseals Miami Valley.

Goodwill Easterseals Miami Valley is headquartered in Dayton Ohio and has regional headquarters in Lima and Portsmouth Ohio. We serve all or parts of 27 Ohio counties<sup>1</sup>, covering a vast portion of the western, central, and even southeastern parts of the state. We empower those in our communities who need support to achieve independence and a better quality of life.

Last year, Goodwill Easterseals Miami Valley's 1,355 dedicated employees served 24,450 Ohioans in over 76 locations across the region. Our organization has over 40 major programs including employment, skills training and workforce development. Last year we helped 943 Ohioans with barriers to employment to find competitive employment across the region we serve.

One prominent barrier to gainful employment is the lack of a high school diploma. In Ohio, there are 870,000 people over the age of 18 who do not have a high school diploma. In our region this equates to 1 out of every 11 adults.

That is why we are working on bringing The Excel Center concept to Ohio. This program is at its core a workforce development program. The Excel Center differs from traditional high schools by providing accelerated in-person classes, a flexible schedule, **free onsite childcare, and target workforce counseling and supports.**

With that, I would like to turn it over to our Vice President and Chief Mission Officer Jen Bonifas to speak a bit more about this important program.

---

<sup>1</sup> Counties served by GEMV: Defiance, Paulding, Putnam, Hancock, Van Wert, Allen, Hardin, Mercer, Auglaize, Darke, Shelby, Logan, Miami, Champaign, Clark, Preble, Montgomery, Greene, Butler, Warren, Clinton, Highland, Adams, Scioto, Lawrence, Galia, and Meigs Counties) and 2 counties in Kentucky

Chair Fowler Arthur, Members of the Committee,

We are excited to see the State of Ohio explore the Excel Center as a pathway for Ohioans over the age of 18 without a high school diploma complete that milestone and enter the Ohio workforce. The Excel Center model has a proven, data-based history of success and a national presence.

The first Excel Center was created with state and local support in neighboring Indiana in 2010 and has grown nationwide with over 47 Excel Center campuses, in 10 states and Washington DC.

Some important facts about The Excel Center student population:

- The average age of our students is 32.
- More than half care for school-aged children.
- Graduates are often the first in their family to graduate from high school.

The Lab for Economic Opportunity at Notre Dame found:

- Excel Center grads are 22% more likely to be employed in the formal sector and higher-paying industries including manufacturing, healthcare, education and technology.
- Five years after graduation The Excel Center graduates are earning 38% more than those without a high school diploma.
- Excel Centers serve all students, creating individualized plans to support their achievement of a high school diploma and providing of wraparound services.
- These study findings have landed The Excel Center in MIT's Policy Impacts Library as having a Marginal Value of Public funds, which is how economists calculate the individual return of a policy, of \$20.67. Which means there's a \$20 per student return on every \$1 invested in an Excel Center student. Investing in adult learner education programs like The Excel Center makes good fiscal sense.

The cost to educate an adult learner under The Excel Center model is comparable to the cost Ohio invests in a community school student. For about \$4,800,000 across the biennium, Ohio can join a national trend of offering our adults without a high school diploma the opportunity to receive a quality education. We look forward to working with the Dayton delegation and the rest of the region to support growth and prosperity in Ohio's untapped workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony, and we would be happy to answer any questions.