March 3, 2025

Dear Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to express Battelle's gratitude for your previous allocation of $3 million to the Ohio STEM Learning Network as a part of HB 33. This investment has significantly expanded our capacity to enhance STEM education across Ohio, to prepare a future workforce ready for the challenges of tomorrow. STEM education is an approach to education that develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills in students while preparing them for careers in science, engineering, technology, and mathematics.

The Ohio STEM Learning Network, a robust public-private partnership between Battelle and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, is successfully implementing a three-part strategy aimed at increasing access to high-quality STEM education for every Ohio community to drive Ohio's economic future. This strategy focuses on advancing STEM for all, supporting tailored community needs, and strengthening models of high-quality STEM implementation.

In FY2024 alone, the network positively impacted students in 695 schools across 86 of Ohio's 88 counties. In just two years, the network's reach has expanded from 858 educators in FY2022 to 3,182 educators in FY2024. These numbers represent a significant expansion of our reach and a substantial growth in our impact.

It is with this proven track record of success that Battelle urges you to maintain the state's investment of $3 million in this critical initiative as proposed in the administration's FY2026-2027 state budget. With continued support, the Ohio STEM Learning Network will further expand its reach and impact, fostering innovation and growth across our state.

Furthermore, we strongly support the Governor's proposed continuation of $4 million annually under the Ohio Department of Higher Education's budget for the Teach CS Program. As computing becomes increasingly essential across all industry sectors, it is imperative that our students are equipped with these high-demand skills to ensure they are well-prepared for the future.

In addition to supporting the Teach CS Program, we urge you to consider the following amendments to enhance Computer Science education:

- Enact a computer science graduation requirement to ensure every student has basic computing skills.

- Fund a CS District Playbook at $500,000 to provide districts with a strategic framework for implementing effective computer science curricula.

- Extend the computer science teacher licensure waiver through 2032 to address the current shortage of qualified teachers.

Your continued support for STEM education is an investment in Ohio's economic stability and growth. The Ohio STEM Learning Network has not only connected educators with universities, businesses, and industries but has also fostered a culture of innovation and mentorship that is essential for our state's future. Through this networked approach, organizations are sharing best practices and learning from one another to ensure our Ohio students are prepared to be the future STEM workforce.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your affirmative action to ensure that every Ohio community continues to benefit from a quality STEM education.

Sincerely,

Kelly Gaier Evans
Director, Ohio STEM Learning Network