

Good morning, esteemed members of the committee and Chairperson Fowler Arthur. Thank you for allowing us to be here today to present the STEM Educator Workforce Collaborative on behalf of the PAST Foundation, our partner schools, districts, and most importantly - students like me in Ohio.

I'm Javier Cruz-Ginez, a student at Ohio State University and former workforce participant.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate in the PAST Foundation's workforce program. Not only did I receive state-recognized credentials, but I also took the first steps in creating a sustainable future for myself. As a former workforce student, I've applied my skillset across my time in college, work, and even my personal life. The workforce program introduced me to a world full of opportunities and taught me I can achieve those goals. These are skills I've shared with other workforce students as a mentor. Using the workforce skills that I learned, I obtained an associate's degree during the last two years of high school, which made receiving my undergraduate degree much more effortless. I'm looking forward to joining the Ohio workforce after graduating this May.