



Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio
Emily Tully, Executive Vice President of Operations and Government Relations
House Education Committee
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Thank you, Chairwoman Fowler-Arthur and members of the House Education Committee for allowing me to testify as an interested party on House Bill (HB) 62 on behalf of Ohio's independent, nonprofit colleges and universities and their students. My name is Emily Tully, and I am the Executive Vice President of Operations and Government Relations for the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio (AICUO).

AICUO represents 50 independent, non-profit colleges all over Ohio. Located in every region of the state, our membership includes research universities, traditional liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, single-purpose institutions, and religiously affiliated colleges.

Today, I am here to express our concern with the bill's provision requiring a 50/50 cost share for textbooks in the College Credit Plus (CCP) program. While this may appear to be a reasonable policy on its face, it presents a significant and disproportionate burden to Ohio's private, nonprofit and religiously affiliated colleges and universities.

Public institutions in the CCP program benefit from double funding, both through the State Share of Instruction (SSI) and reimbursement through CCP. Independent institutions, however, do not receive SSI funding. All that our institutions receive is the small amount of funding associated with the program. As you may know, this can be as little as \$40 per credit hour, which is a very steep discount to CCP students compared to all other students. Our institutions receive no operational dollars from the state; our institutions offer these discounts because it is part of our mission to support our local communities.

One of the fallacies that you may hear is that CCP offers institutions a pipeline for enrollment. That is not the case today under CCP and was not the case under the previous post-secondary enrollment option program, at least with our institutions. Students tend to enroll at their local institution for CCP and then go on to their dream institution for college, wherever that may be.

Historically, independent colleges in Ohio have been leaders in dual enrollment innovation. Institutions like the University of Findlay and Ohio Dominican University once operated Ohio's only two nationally recognized programs. However, Ohio Dominican has already

discontinued its College Credit Plus (CCP) offerings because the financial cost to the institution was too much. In fact, the oldest running dual-enrollment program was offered by Oberlin, which has also shuttered its program due to the constraints of CCP.

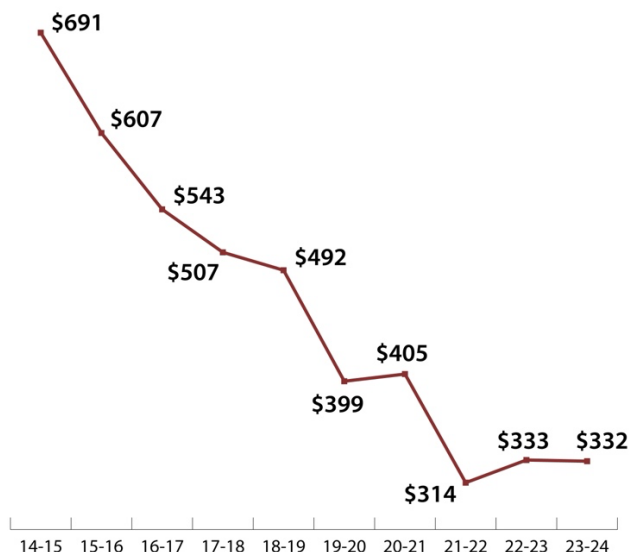
Although independent institutions currently make up only nine percent of CCP participation, they play a vital role in serving students, especially in areas with limited access to public options or for students who want to receive a faith-based education. However, the proposed 50/50 textbook cost share threatens to push the remaining independent institutions out as well.

At independent colleges, CCP is not seen as a revenue generator or recruitment pipeline. Our institutions participate in the program to serve students, often in rural or underserved areas, who may not otherwise have access to early college credit. Most of our institutions offer CCP courses at a significant discount, and we work hard to keep tuition low through our own internal cost-saving measures.

Simply put, our institutions cannot absorb the cost of providing both tuition and textbooks without support. If this provision is enacted, many religiously affiliated colleges may be forced to exit the CCP program. This would significantly reduce educational choice for Ohio students and create real geographic challenges, particularly in rural communities where the nearest public college may be more than 30 miles away or only accessible online.

Course-Material Costs Have Decreased by 46% Over Last Decade

The average dollar amount spent by college students on course materials during the academic year



Source: Lifestyle and Media Survey Report.
(Fall 2023, Spring 2024). Student Monitor.



Student textbook costs are already at their lowest in a decade, with average spending down 46 percent since 2014. This decline reflects higher education's commitment to affordability, which is driven by student needs through the use of lower-cost materials and digital resources. Independent colleges operate in a competitive landscape without state subsidies and work hard to keep costs down, and the data shows that those efforts are having a real impact.

CCP has been around for over a decade, and AICUO believes it is time for a full policy review of the program. For this reason, AICUO fully supports the amendment accepted during the last committee hearing to establish a study committee on CCP. As this committee knows better than most, the funding formula for our K-12 partners has gone through many iterations since CCP was created. As one of the very few people still in my role when CCP was established, I can tell you that online education was not expected to ever become the option it is today.

Part of the frustration this committee has heard from our K-12 partners is the fact that the formula is reflective of funding a decade ago. A policy study committee offers a valuable opportunity to examine how the program has performed since its implementation. AICUO believes such a study is essential to shaping thoughtful, equitable policy that preserves student access and institutional participation across K-12 and higher education.

While we understand and appreciate that the Auditor of State has reviewed this program, that review focused only on the operational side of public institutions. Independent colleges are fundamentally different in both funding structure and mission. We urge the legislature to direct the Department of Higher Education to conduct a policy and fiscal review of the program, not just a fiscal analysis.

Independent institutions participate in CCP not because we are required to do so, but because we want to be partners for the benefit of local communities and students. If further unfunded mandates are placed on our institutions, they will sadly have no choice but to continue shuttering their CCP programs, leaving thousands of students with even fewer educational choices than they have today.

Thank you for your time, and AICUO looks forward to working with this committee to ensure that the CCP program remains equitable, sustainable, and accessible for all Ohio students.