

Sponsor Testimony to the House Education Committee JROTC Bill (HB500)

Thank you, Chair **Fowler Arthur**, Vice Chair **Odioso**, Ranking Member **Brennan**, and members of the House Education Committee for inviting me to testify today. I am grateful for your time.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 500. This legislation would amend the Ohio Revised Code to allow a school district's JROTC program to be designated as part of that district's **career-technical education (CTE)** offerings. Specifically:

I bring this bill forward because I believe it offers meaningful benefits to students, school districts, and the State of Ohio.

First, it would expand Career Pathways while honoring JROTC's Educational Value.

- The JROTC program is already widely acknowledged for developing leadership, discipline, civic readiness, character, teamwork, and responsibility in students.
- By formally recognizing the program as a component of career tech, we elevate the program's status in the academic and vocational continuum, and more fully integrate it into the pathway toward postsecondary opportunities.
- As you likely know, many students who participate in JROTC are motivated by service, leadership, and opportunities in public safety, defense, as first responders, and in related fields.
- This bill helps align the program with the State's existing commitment to career readiness, making it easier for students to receive credit, recognition, and support equivalent to other CTE programs.

Second, this legislation would encourage districts to expand and strengthen JROTC.

- By making JROTC eligible under the career tech umbrella, districts would have an additional incentive to maintain or expand these programs, knowing they can count toward their CTE portfolio.
 - This would help stabilize funding and justification for staff, facilities, and support resources.
 - In rural or under-resourced districts, that encouragement may be critical to sustaining the program.

Third, this legislation would help “level the playing field” and provide accessibility for students.

- Not all students have access to traditional technical or vocational programs due to geography, scheduling, or resource constraints.
- Many school districts already offer JROTC; this bill ensures that more students—regardless of locale—can benefit from the educational and vocational advantages of the program without having to navigate separate, disconnected systems.
- Furthermore, for students interested in public service, law enforcement, emergency management, homeland security, or defense careers, this program offers an accessible bridge.
- Incorporating JROTC into the CTE framework helps ensure these students’ work is counted, tracked, and supported on par with other technical tracks.

Finally, this legislation is characterized by thoughtful implementation and funding considerations.

- I understand the concerns about how these programs will be categorized, funded, and monitored.

- That is why HB500 includes a directive that the Department of Education and Workforce, and lead districts, determine how JROTC fits into existing CTE categories for funding purposes.
 - This gives the state flexibility, while ensuring oversight and consistency.
- Also, designating this program as CTE does *not* force any district to adopt or expand JROTC.
 - It merely gives districts the option to formally recognize the program as part of their CTE portfolio if they already offer it.

In closing, H.B. 500 is a modest, strategic change that better aligns one of Ohio's strongest youth leadership and character programs with our statewide career readiness goals.

It helps districts, respects local control, and most importantly, gives students who choose JROTC access to the same support, recognition, and accountability that their peers in other CTE programs receive.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB500. Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions.