

Eastin Lewellen
Director of Workforce Development | Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center
House Finance Committee | March 11, 2025

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Eastin Lewellen, and I serve as the Director of Workforce Development at the Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center (ESC). I am here to express my strong support for the budget appropriation request for Junior Achievement (JA), which will significantly expand JA's programming and positively impact students, schools, and communities across our region.

At Muskingum Valley ESC, we believe in the power of hands-on, experiential learning to prepare students for Ohio's evolving workforce. That is why we were proud to partner with Junior Achievement to host JA Inspire in October 2024, a career exploration event that connected students, educators, and local businesses. The students who attended, many from Appalachian communities, had never been exposed to the career opportunities available to them. JA Inspire opened their eyes to new possibilities, directly linking them to in-demand industries and employers eager to engage with the next generation of talent.

Beyond JA Inspire, Junior Achievement's commitment to workforce readiness, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship education aligns closely with our mission at Muskingum Valley ESC. Schools in Ohio are required to provide financial literacy education, and Junior Achievement offers a proven, no-cost solution that is both engaging and effective. Additionally, JA strengthens local economies by bringing together businesses, chambers of commerce, and educators in a shared effort to prepare students for the future.

The requested budget appropriation of \$2.75M per fiscal year will provide the necessary resources to sustain and expand these efforts, ensuring that more students have access to high-quality career readiness programs. This investment is a direct investment in Ohio's workforce and economic future.

I urge this committee to support this funding request to expand Junior Achievement's programs. The impact is clear, the need is urgent, and the return on investment will be felt across our communities for years to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the students and schools that will benefit from this critical investment.