



Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 96.

My name is Evan Eagleson, and I am the Legislative Director for the Great Lakes Region with [ExcelinEd in Action](http://ExcelinEdinAction.org), a national non-profit organization focused on student-centered policies that improve outcomes in the states.

I would like to begin by commending Governor DeWine and the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) on their budget proposal. The proposed budget, HB 96, would ensure that students are set up for educational excellence and real-world success.

First, ExcelinEd in Action would like to thank the Governor for maintaining his commitment to **improving early literacy**. Reading is the gateway to learning and if our children cannot read, they simply do not stand a chance for a successful future. This budget includes strong provisions related to literacy initiatives, including:

- \$12 million each fiscal year for literacy coaches in schools with the lowest reading proficiency rates.
- A requirement that all public school teachers and administrators complete competency-based training in the science of reading.

Another highlight is the funding for **universal access to the EdChoice voucher program** and the **final phase-in of the fair school funding formula**. Every child deserves access to a quality education that provides the knowledge, skills and values necessary to prepare them for a career and fulfilling life. ExcelinEd in Action recognizes that education choice allows families to choose the best educational fit for their children, and that these choices include public, private and non-traditional schooling options such as community/charter schools. Accordingly, we support the increase in per-pupil funding from \$1,000 to \$1,500 for community school facilities and the much-needed improvements to the unused school facilities law. One of the most critical issues facing community schools is the lack of access to affordable facilities. These changes help ensure crucial operating funds can be directed toward student instruction.

The Governor's budget proposal takes a positive step to **reduce classroom distractions** by requiring districts to adopt the DEW model policy prohibiting cell phone use during the instructional day. Schools implementing such policies have seen fewer distractions, increased student engagement, better teacher morale and reduced cyberbullying.



ExcelinEd in Action commends Governor DeWine's continued support of **career technical education and career exploration**. In today's evolving job market, careers demand changing and expanding knowledge and skill sets. Education-to-workforce pathways can empower students to learn authenticated in-demand skills that prepare them for growing careers.

In that vein, we support the Governor's proposed continuation of \$4 million annually for the Teach CS Program. **Computer science** has become an essential part of a well-rounded, modern education. In our digital world, Ohio students must understand concepts like the internet, algorithms and debugging to help fill in-demand jobs. We ask that the legislature consider an additional \$500,000 to support a Computer Science (CS) District "Playbook." The CS District "Playbook" would contain comprehensive resources for school districts to implement computer science education.

In addition, we would like to recommend the legislature amend the provision in HB 96 that provides students with **advanced learning opportunities in mathematics**. The policy as written can be strengthened by requiring districts to adopt a comprehensive math placement policy including a curriculum roadmap that outlines how students will be prepared and placed in Algebra 1. It should include a policy that automatically enrolls into Algebra 1 any seventh-grade student who scores Accomplished or Advanced on the state test. Ensuring students with math aptitude have access to the mathematics courses that are appropriately challenging and enriching results in further student success.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. We are firm believers that every student can succeed if given the proper tools and I look forward to working with you all to ensure the future remains bright for Ohio's students.

Respectfully,

Evan Eagleson
Legislative Director, Great Lakes Region
ExcelinEd in Action