



**Ohio House Finance Committee
State Operating Budget (HB 96)
March 12, 2025**

Testimony of Harry Snyder, Superintendent of Great Oaks Career Campuses

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Harry Snyder, and I serve as the Superintendent of Great Oaks Career Campuses, a Joint Vocational School District (JVSD) proudly educating students from multiple school districts across southwestern Ohio. I am here testifying on behalf of Great Oaks Career Campuses, the Ohio Association of Career-Technical Superintendents (OACTS), the Ohio Association for Career-Technical Education (Ohio ACTE), and the Ohio Association of Comprehensive and Compact Career-Technical Schools (Ohio CCS). Together, these organizations represent the backbone of Ohio's career-technical education (CTE) system, advocating for the students, educators, and communities who rely on CTE to build a skilled and competitive workforce.

I want to begin by expressing our heartfelt appreciation to the administration and the legislature for their steadfast commitment to career-technical education in recent years. The \$300 million in expansion and facilities grants allocated in the previous budget, coupled with the passage of House Bill 432, have accelerated the growth of CTE in Ohio. At Great Oaks, these resources have enabled us to expand program offerings in fields like advanced manufacturing and healthcare, hire additional qualified instructors with industry expertise, and open doors for thousands of students to gain hands-on training in high-demand careers. Across the state, these investments have fueled innovation and opportunity, and we are deeply grateful for your leadership in recognizing CTE as a vital pillar of Ohio's economic prosperity.

The Expanded Role of Career-Technical Education in Ohio

Career-tech is experiencing remarkable growth in Ohio, reflecting both student demand and employer need. In 2024 alone, more than 140,000 students statewide enrolled in CTE courses, a number that mirrors the significant uptick we've seen at Great Oaks, where our campuses are bustling with learners eager to master skills ranging from welding to cybersecurity. The outcomes speak for themselves: nearly 95% of our graduates secure employment, pursue further education, or enlist in the military within six months of completing their programs. These young men and women are filling critical roles as nurses, machinists, IT specialists, and first responders—jobs that power Ohio's economy and strengthen our communities.

Yet, this growth has exposed a pressing challenge: our facilities are still struggling to keep pace. Many of our buildings, constructed decades ago, were not designed for the sophisticated equipment and expansive lab spaces required by today's CTE programs. Modernizing these facilities is not just a matter of convenience—it's a necessity to ensure our students receive training that meets current industry standards. Your continued support is essential to sustaining this momentum.

Addressing Funding Challenges for CTE Facilities

One of the most significant hurdles facing JVSDs like Great Oaks is the inadequacy of the current funding framework for facility construction and renovation. The Ohio Facilities Construction

Commission (OFCC) process, while effective for traditional K-12 schools, is ill-suited to the unique demands of CTE institutions. A single CTE lab—for instance, an automotive repair bay or a healthcare simulation suite—can cost upwards of \$2 million to build and equip with cutting-edge technology. These specialized needs far exceed the scope of typical classroom construction, yet the OFCC process requires local districts to shoulder a substantial match, often through large levies that strain community resources. Over the past ten years, only three JVSDs have successfully navigated this system to access OFCC funds, a stark indicator of its limitations.

To address this, we propose the creation of a legislative study committee tasked with crafting a tailored, sustainable funding solution for CTE facilities. This committee should include representatives from Ohio ACTE, OACTS, and Ohio CCS—voices with deep expertise in CTE’s operational realities. Potential solutions could include a dedicated funding stream for CTE capital projects or a grant program for smaller-scale renovations, both of which would reduce reliance on the traditional OFCC model.

Funding Formula Priority

We applaud the budget’s efforts to update JVSD enrollment numbers and continue the phase-in of the school funding formula, steps that greatly support career-tech statewide. However, we respectfully urge the addition of a 50% state share floor for CTE supplemental funding to address a persistent inequity. Many CTE schools, particularly Compacts and Comprehensives, serve students from multiple member districts with varying state share percentages. Of the 102 districts served by these schools, 61 have a state share below 50%, meaning the state covers less than half the cost of critical CTE equipment and supplies like welding torches, medical mannequins, or software licenses. This disparity puts these schools at a disadvantage, limiting their ability to maintain robust programs. Establishing a 50% floor would level the playing field.

Strengthening Ohio Technical Centers

Ohio Technical Centers (OTCs) are another linchpin of our workforce development strategy, delivering short-term, high-impact training to hundreds of adult learners each year. With a remarkable 97% job placement rate, OTCs are a proven success story, connecting graduates to careers in fields like trucking, electrical work, and medical assisting. Yet, despite their impact, OTCs remain level-funded in the current budget proposal. We respectfully request an additional \$1 million per fiscal year to expand capacity, upgrade aging equipment, and tailor programs to meet the evolving needs of regional employers.

Additionally, we strongly support the OTC Plus program, which allows high school students facing waitlists to access CTE training through OTCs (in recognition of the need for flexibility in student schedules to balance academic and extracurricular commitments). The program addresses the need for access to CTE and helps accommodate the diverse needs of students. To ensure its sustainability, we ask lawmakers to clarify that OTCs can draw Higher Education Institution (HEI) funding for these students, akin to the College Credit Plus model.

Conclusion

Career-technical education is not just an educational option—it’s a cornerstone of Ohio’s economic future. By tackling facilities funding challenges, establishing a fair funding formula, and bolstering Ohio Technical Centers, we can equip more students with the skills to drive our state forward. On behalf of Great Oaks, OACTS, Ohio ACTE, and Ohio CCS, I thank you for your ongoing partnership and dedication to this cause.