

**44<sup>th</sup> House District**

Lucas County  
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**Committees**

Energy  
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Rules and Reference  
Workforce and Higher  
Education



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**State Representative Joshua E. Williams**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**

Chairman Stewart, Vice-Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and fellow members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 98 today. I also would like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Santucci, for re-introducing this legislation this General Assembly.

As with various other bills I have introduced this General Assembly, HB 98 seeks to bolster our workforce development for students at a young age. By increasing access to education for soft skills and workplace efficiency habits, we can truly prepare our students for their next steps, whether that is higher education, the workforce, military, etc. This will be achieved through the following portions of the bill:

- The Department of Education and Workforce must establish and oversee the program, which will be administered by local Educational Service Centers (ESCs) and a dedicated director(s) for the school(s) that the ESCs serve
- The directors will
  - Create an application and interview process to determine how many students are prepared to participate in the program
  - Offer regular classroom instruction about soft and professional skills like problem solving, time management, critical thinking, communication, and civility/ethics
  - Collaborate with OhioMeansJobs and/or local workforce boards to identify local employment needs and opportunities to partner students with
  - Create and present a report to ESCs and the Department of Education and Workforce that details the amount of students participating and its level of success

Through this structure, the bill ensures that the educational programs will be efficient and effective. Through the \$8 million appropriation, we can avoid placing the burden of an unfunded mandate on our local school districts. This investment into our youth will prove beneficial to the state as we can help each generation become well-rounded, productive employees who contribute to their workplaces and communities.

The importance of these skills is growing rapidly as automation proliferates. Employees will need to use advanced cognitive skills more in the workplace as lower-level tasks become less of a priority. According to a 2018 study done by McKinsey<sup>1</sup>, “[Their] research also finds a shift from activities that require only basic cognitive skills to those that use higher cognitive skills. Demand for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/skill-shift-automation-and-the-future-of-the-workforce>

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higher cognitive skills, such as creativity, critical thinking, decision making, and complex information processing, will grow through 2030, by 19 percent in the United States...from sizable bases today.” Advancement in these types of skills will be at the center of the Community Connectors Workforce Program, and will help shape our burgeoning workforce.

Chairman Stewart, Vice-Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 98. I welcome any questions you may have.